

# A Winning Smile

Gina walked slowly toward the school building. Her stomach fluttered with butterflies. Today she was starting school in a new town. Hopefully, she would make some new friends, too. She turned around and waved to her parents, and they gave her a thumbs up; if they only knew how nervous she was.

At her old school, Gina had many friends whom she had known since kindergarten. When Gina got braces, it was no big deal. Her friends never made fun of her. But that was the past. The future was here—inside the new school.

The students in Gina’s class were friendly, but Gina didn’t smile much. She didn’t want anyone to see her braces. Finally, it was time for gym class. Luckily for Gina, they were playing baseball—her favorite sport.

“Gina,” the coach announced, “play shortstop today, okay?”

“Sure thing!” Gina said as she put on a glove and trotted out to her place between second and third base. She scanned the field and glanced over to second base, where a tall boy stood.

Suddenly, the batter slugged the ball in her direction. The ball bounced several times before Gina caught it. As the runner headed toward second base, Gina threw the ball to the tall boy. The runner was out!

“Good throw!” the tall boy said with a smile. His smile was bright, metallic, and shiny, just like hers. She smiled back, allowing her braces to show. They both laughed, and Gina knew her future was going to be just fine.

**Questions**

1. Why is Gina's stomach "fluttering with butterflies"?
2. How did Gina's childhood friends act when she got braces?
3. Why is the tall boy important to the story?
4. Gina's mood changes during the story. Describe her mood at the beginning of the story and then explain why she changes her mood at the end of the story.

---

**Vocabulary List**

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. fluttered
2. scanned
3. batter
4. slugged
5. metallic

---

**Context Clues**

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1. "Her stomach **fluttered** with butterflies."

- a. tattooed    b. gurgled, made noise    c. damaged    d. trembled, quivered

2. "She **scanned** the field and glanced over to second base"

- a. searched, inspected    b. ran onto    c. left, departed    d. strolled, walked slowly

3. "the **batter** slugged the ball in her direction"

- a. dough for a cake    b. pitching machine    c. player at bat, hitter    d. coach

4. "the batter **slugged** the ball in her direction"

- a. rolled    b. hit hard    c. tossed gently    d. bounced

5. "His smile was bright, **metallic**, and shiny"

- a. happy, gleeful    b. full of teeth    c. resembling metal, gleaming    d. handsome