

The Tree Swing

Story By: Andrew Frinkle



Craig wasn't really afraid of heights, but he wasn't exactly brave, either. So, when his friends found a good tree hanging out over the swimming lake, they chose him to shimmy up the tree and tie a rope around the middle of it for a rope swing.

Climbing wasn't so bad. It was almost fun, even if he was extra careful. If he fell, he'd land in the water, so it wasn't that bad, but landing funny could hurt, too. The tree was thick enough that he could straddle it and scoot his way up it, except when branches poked out. He had to work his way around those carefully. All the while, he had a coil of heavy rope tossed around his shoulder and across his back.

He looked down a few times, trying not to feel how high up he was. The wind had the tree swaying, and more than once he wondered if the tired old roots of the tilted tree would give out and he'd go splashing down into the lake, tree and all.

When he was about thirty foot up the tree, which was roughly twenty feet above the water, because of the angle, he felt he was high enough. In front of a knotty section of wood where two stubs of broken branches stuck out, he began to tie his knot.

He was carefully tying, because starting the knot was the hard part. If he let the full weight of the rope drop, it might very well pull the whole rope down into the water, and he'd have to climb back up the tree again. So, he started with a loop first, which he passed under the trunk. He had to hug the trunk and stretch his arms to reach the loop on the other side. When he felt the loop, he pulled it up and used that to start his knot.

His knot was a complicated one, since not just any old knot would hold the weight of the boys as they swung out over the lake. He tied his strongest hitch knot, anchoring the rope solidly to the tree. He tied the best knots in the group, which was probably another reason why they'd all chosen him to go up the tree.

Next, he had to add knots to the base of the rope, so it wouldn't drag in the water. To do this, he lowered the rope all the way, letting it drag in the water. Once he saw how much he had to shorten it, he pulled it back up, adding an extra large knot at the bottom for feet to cling to, and a couple four or five feet higher up the rope for hands to hold on to.

He was done! He grinned and scooted carefully back down the tree. He'd been sorely tempted to slide down the rope he'd tied and drop into the water, but he wanted to get the first swing in, since he'd tied it. Halfway down the trunk, he felt he was safe enough to drop into the water.

SPLASH! His feet cut through the surface of the water, and the cool, dark water rushed up in a fizzle past his face. A few strong strokes of his arm carried him to the surface and then over to his rope, which he grabbed. His friends cheered as they watched him bring the rope back in.

He ascended the trunk after getting a few high five's from his friends. He went up about seven or eight feet, just high enough that he knew he could swing down and clear the shore of the lake. There was no way he wanted to catch his feet on the dirt and tumble into the water; no, he had to clear the shore and swing out. That meant he needed to lift his legs and pull up with his arms. Once over the lake, he could relax his arms, hang, and drop.

Like Tarzan, he howled as he jumped up off the tree trunk, and then gravity snagged him. Down he went, but the rope kept him traveling on an arc, rather than send him heading straight into the ground. Along the water he whizzed, his toes dragging across the surface as he hurtled outward. At the peak of his swing away from the shore, he let go. It felt like he was twenty feet in the air, and he kept sailing farther out as he let go of the rope, carried by momentum.

With a second SPLASH, he hit the water. He came up howling in delight. His work had paid off. Now, he and his friends could enjoy this rope swing for the rest of vacation. Some of the other kids from down the shore might even come by. It was going to be awesome!



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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. Which BEST describes what was Craig doing in the story?
 - A. Tying knots
 - B. Swimming
 - C. Tying a rope for a swing
 - D. Climbing trees

2. What kind of knot does Craig tie?
 - A. A simple knot
 - B. A hitch knot
 - C. A Palomar knot
 - D. A sailor's knot

3. Who got to try the swing first?
 - A. Craig
 - B. Craig's friend
 - C. The kids down the shore
 - D. No one used the swing

4. How would you BEST describe Craig, according to his behavior in the story?
 - A. focused and brave
 - B. foolish and cowardly
 - C. silly and playful
 - D. friendly and hard-working

5. Which of these was a reason why they chose Craig to climb the tree?
 - A. He was crazy enough to do it.
 - B. He was a good swimmer.
 - C. He tied good knots.
 - D. He was scared of heights.

The Tree Swing – Answer Key

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