

LEAP DAY



“I’ll bet that you would like me a lot better if I looked like her,” she mumbled under her breath.

Before You Read: Vocabulary

Look over the vocabulary, and then complete the activity on the next page.

Wordlist for "Leap Day"		
word	definition	sentence
ingratiating	trying to gain favor (trying to get someone to like you)	My ingratiating date told me I was pretty every five minutes.
quixotic	extremely romantic or hopeful	Only quixotic people believe in love at first sight.
haughtiness	arrogance (the act of thinking you're better than everyone)	Her haughtiness caused her to lose many friends.
surreal	seeming unreal (like a dream)	When Jasmine won a million dollars, it seemed surreal .
stupefied	very surprised; shocked	When Evan got accepted to Harvard, his family was stupefied .
incredulous	skeptical (not sure if you should believe someone or not)	When my mom told me I could stay out past midnight, I was incredulous ; I thought it was a trick.
quip	to make a clever comment or remark	"The reason that you are losing is because you are loser," she quipped .
erudite	very intelligent	The erudite girl would like to become an astronaut someday.
enigmatic/cryptic (These two words have similar meanings.)	mysterious	Shondra has an enigmatic smile that makes you wonder what she is thinking. Brad's brother sent him a cryptic text message.
rescind	to take back	Be careful what you say because you cannot rescind words.
bourgeois	middle-class	The bourgeois know nothing about hunger and struggle.

Wordlist for "Leap Day"

word	definition	sentence
proletariat	working-class (associated with not having a lot of money or power)	I wish that more politicians would consider the struggles of the proletariat ; they tend to only think about the middle-class.
idiosyncrasy	a specific habit that is specific to a certain person.	One of my many idiosyncrasies is that I scratch my neck when I am nervous.
banter	conversation that is light and playful	Before the meeting, the employees engaged in silly banter .

Part 1: Write the correct word in the blanks below.

1. _____ skeptical (not sure if you should believe someone or not)
2. _____ seeming unreal (like a dream)
3. _____ to take back
4. _____ a specific habit that is specific to a certain person.
5. _____ conversation that is light and playful
6. _____ trying to gain favor (trying to get someone to like you)
7. _____ mysterious
8. _____ middle-class
9. _____ working-class (associated with not having a lot of money or power)
10. _____ very surprised; shocked
11. _____ extremely romantic or hopeful
12. _____ very intelligent
13. _____ to make a clever comment or remark
14. _____ arrogance (the act of thinking you're better than everyone)

ingratiating
quixotic
haughtiness
surreal
stupefied
incredulous
quip
erudite
enigmatic/cryptic (These two words have similar meanings.)
rescind
bourgeois
proletariat
idiosyncrasy
banter

Part 2: Write a **meaningful** sentence for each word.

Before You Read: Discussion/Reflection

Read the following statements:

- A. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.
- B. Beauty is in the eye of the culture.

Which statement do you agree with? Write 1-2 paragraphs in which you explain why you agree with that particular statement. Use specific examples from, real life, novels, stories, movies, etc. to support your argument.

While You Read: Literary Terms

Static Character - a character that does not change throughout the story

Dynamic Character - a character that changes throughout the story.

While you are reading this story, think about the characters. Do they change, or do they stay the same?

Leap Day

Kayla was not what you would call a pretty girl. She was not an ugly girl, but she was not a pretty girl either. Kayla was sixteen years old. She was a slender girl of average height with a straight up-and-down figure. She had a short crinkly Afro and black-rimmed glasses.

She played the saxophone, and she wanted to be a doctor. Her dream was to give medical care to malnourished children in third-world countries.

Kayla, a sophomore at Washington Park High School, had a group of friends as equally unpretty as her. Her boyfriend, Raymond, was a scrawny little guy with prominent black-rimmed glasses who no one would look at twice.

One Tuesday night, February 28th, Raymond and Kayla were sitting in the Brownstone Bookstore sipping lattes while studying for an upcoming AP Chemistry exam.

"What's the formula for aluminum chloride?" asked Raymond with an agitated voice that let Kayla know that he had been asking her that question for quite some time.

"Oh, um, it's $AlCl_3$, and that question is way too easy."

"She's gorgeous, isn't she?" she asked with her eyes fixated on the object that had caused her not to hear Raymond.

Raymond glanced at the Beyonce-esque girl standing in the magazine section and said flatly, "If you like that sort of thing."

"Everybody likes that sort of thing," she said.

"Not me," he said, pushing his glasses up on his nose. "I like you."

"Um, thanks, I guess," she said sarcastically.

"Well, you know what I mean."

"Yes, I know what you mean," she said with a forgiving smile. She took a sip of her latte.

"I'll bet that you would like me a lot better if I looked like her," she mumbled under her breath.

"Whatyousay?"

"Nothing," she said **quixotically**. "Nothing."

Madison, who was also a student at Washington Park High School, was not what you would call a pretty girl; she was what you would call a gorgeous girl. She had buttery brown skin and long dark hair that she could wear curly or straight. She was not a nice girl, but she wasn't a mean girl either. She seemed to be aware of her powers but not to the point of overwhelming arrogance.

There was, however, a slight **haughtiness** about her. But that seemed almost inevitable. It seemed as if her beauty made people want to do things for her. Strangers went out of their way to open doors for her. **Ingratiating** fast food workers always seemed to find a way to put an extra bag of fries or an extra taco in her bag. Boys always seemed to want to pay for her lunch, even when it was clear that she had her own money. And on Valentine's Day, her room looked like a florist's. Sometimes even teachers seemed to cater to her, just because her genes had lined up correctly.

“Well, you’ve got something far more attractive than her; you’ve got a beautiful mind and a magnificent heart,” said Raymond, yawning.

“I’d rather have a beautiful face and a magnificent body,” she said dryly as the clock struck 12:00. It was the beginning of Leap Day.

When Kayla woke up the next morning, she found a luscious mass of curls and waves lying on her pillow. It was her hair, attached to her head.

She looked in the mirror. She was what someone, anyone, everyone would call GORGEOUS. It was unbelievable, like Santa Claus and unicorns. But it was real, real like rainbows and rainforests and thunderstorms: magnificent, beautiful, and **surreal**—yet real.

When she sat down to the breakfast table, her family was **stupefied**; they did not recognize her physically, but somehow they knew it was her. She still had her **idiosyncrasies**, like the way she walked slightly to the left.

Her father, who was engrossed in his iPad, was the only one who didn’t seem to notice. Her voice was still the same: “It’s me, Kayla,” she said. “I made a wish, and it came true.”

Her sister, Kacey, touched her long, luxurious locks **incredulously**.

“Everyone gets one wish in life that comes true,” said her grandmother, Ella. “You got yours early; be careful what you wish for. My wish was to be rich; I was an accountant at the time.”

“What happened, G’Ma?” asked T.J. “Cause you broke as a joke now.”

Kayla’s mother slapped T.J. on the back of his head and said, “Stop being disrespectful.”

“Oh, Vanessa, the child don’t mean no harm,” said Grandma Ella. “I became rich, but I lost my accounting skills. I ended up squandering my money. Now here I am in this mansion with my smart-aleck grandson,” she added sarcastically as she looked around the cramped townhouse.

“Grandma, you know you love me,” teased T.J.

“Sometimes,” Grandma **quipped**.

“If I were you, Kayla, I would try to reverse the wish. Since today is Leap Day, you may be able to reverse your wish, but you must do it before midnight.”

What, reverse the wish? Why wouldn’t I want to be beautiful, thought Kayla.

Kayla heard Raymond pull up in front of their townhouse. Boy, is he gonna be happy to be dating a beautiful girl, she thought.

“It’s me, Ray; I got my wish,” she said as she tossed back her long, luxurious tresses.

Raymond looked at her as if he had seen a ghost.

“So what do you think?” she asked teasingly, thinking she knew the answer.

“I think we don’t match,” he mumbled. “You’re the **bourgeois** and I am the **proletariat**.”

“Whatever that means,” said Kayla.

“You don’t get it; you don’t understand the **bourgeois** and the **proletariat**?” asked Raymond.

“Oh, you are hurting my brain,” said Kayla.

“But you always liked my **erudite, enigmatic, cryptic** humor.”

“Whoa, what’s with all the big words?” asked Kayla.

“You’re different.”

“Yes, I am beautiful.”

“In face and body, but what happened to your mind?”

Indeed, her mind had been altered. When Kayla got to school and took her chemistry test, she did not know half of the answers. It was then that doubt started to creep in, like ants to a

breadcrumb. *How could she be a doctor if she couldn't even pass a chemistry test? How could she go to third-world countries and help dying children if her brain wouldn't cooperate?*

As the day wore on, the exhilaration of being beautiful continued to wear off, like a cheap lipstick. Kayla noticed that all of the boys wanted to be around her, except that one boy who had her heart, Raymond. Furthermore, when she sat with her friends in the cafeteria, it was obvious that she didn't fit. It was awkward, and she stuck out like a beautiful sore thumb.

That afternoon, when she rode home from school with Raymond, they had nothing to talk about. Her brain felt fuzzy, and she couldn't keep up with their usual **cryptic** and **erudite banter**.

When Kayla got home she ran to G'ma's room in tears. "G'ma, do you think that there is a way to reverse all of this? I just want to go back to the way that things were."

"Kayla, you don't listen," she said. "Now, I told you this morning that you have a good chance of reversing cause it's Leap Day. Go back to the place that you made the wish and earnestly **rescind** your wish, and it may work."

Kayla rushed back to the store and wished herself normal again, vowing never to be envious again.

The next morning when Kayla woke up, she did not have thick, luxurious waves and curls. She had a soft spongy Afro. She did not have a voluptuous body; she had her thin, almost-boyish figure back, and she loved it.

She was so excited when Ray came to pick her up. But when she looked at him, he was not himself. He was a tall, dark and handsome young man with striking features and a chiseled jaw line. He looked nothing like himself. He looked like a singer or an actor, someone who got paid for being beautiful.

"Ray," she said, surprised and startled. "What happened?"

"I made a wish to be extraordinarily handsome, so that I could, so that we could match."

"But, now we don't," she said as tears welled in her eyes. "I reversed my wish."

"Well, I'll just reverse it like you did."

"You can't reverse it; it's March 1st."

After You Read: Comprehension and Analysis

Reading Comprehension

1. What are Kayla's career aspirations? Based on this, what can you infer about her?
2. How does Kayla's father respond to her new appearance? Based on this, what can you infer about Kayla's father?
3. Why is Raymond attracted to Kayla? Use specific examples from the text to support your answer.
4. Draw a Venn diagram and compare and contrast Raymond and Kayla.
5. What do you think will happen to Kayla and Raymond? Do you think that they will stay together?

Literary Analysis/Critical Thinking

1. What type of character is Kayla: static or dynamic? Explain.
2. What type of character is Raymond: static or dynamic? Explain.

Creative Writing

1. Write a story from Madison's point of view. Think about why her life may not be as easy as others think it might be. What are some problems that she might face because of her appearance?

Research

1. This story takes place during leap year. Research this topic. What exactly is a leap year? Why do we have leap years?

Answer Key for “Leap Day”

Vocabulary

1. incredulous
2. surreal
3. rescind
4. idiosyncrasy
5. banter
6. ingratiating
7. enigmatic/cryptic
8. bourgeois
9. proletariat
10. stupefied
11. quixotic
12. erudite
13. quip
14. haughtiness

Reading Comprehension

1. What are Kayla's career aspirations? Based on this, what can you infer about her?
Kayla wants to be a doctor and help children in third world

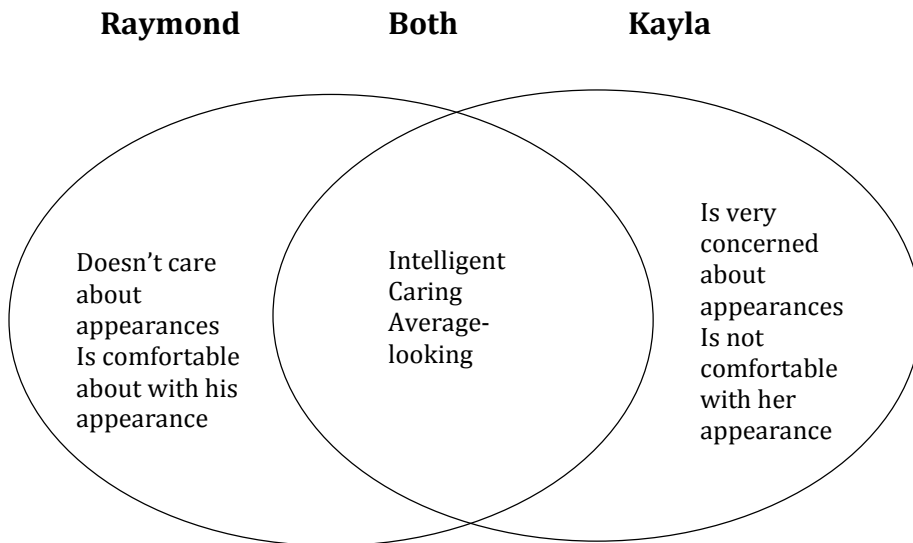
2. How does Kayla's father respond to her new appearance? Based on this, what can you infer about Kayla's father?

Kayla's father doesn't notice her new appearance; he doesn't say anything about it. One could infer that Kayla's father does not really pay attention to what is going on in the family. One could also infer that Kayla's father does not care a lot about appearances; he loves Kayla for who she is.

3. Why is Raymond attracted to Kayla?

He is attracted to her because she has a "beautiful mind and a magnificent spirit."

4. Draw a Venn diagram and compare and contrast Raymond and Kayla.



5. What do you think will happen to Kayla and Raymond? Do you think that they will stay together?

Answers will vary.

Literary Analysis

1. What type of character is Kayla: static or dynamic? Explain.
Kayla is a dynamic character. At the beginning of the story, she is concerned with appearances. She wants to be beautiful. She is envious of beautiful people like Madison. By the end of the story, she is happy with her appearance. She no longer wants to be beautiful.
2. What type of character is Raymond: static or dynamic? Explain.
Though Raymond goes through a physical transformation, he stays the same emotionally and mentally. He remains consistent throughout the story in that he does not care about appearances; he only changes his physical appearance because he loves Kayla. (If he cared about physical appearances, he wouldn't have been so eager to change back to his normal appearance at the end of the story.)

Creative Writing

1. Write a story from Madison's point of view. Think about why her life may not be as easy as others think it might be. What are some problems that she might face because of her appearance?

Answers will vary

Research

1. This story takes place during leap year. Research this topic. What exactly is a leap year? Why do we have leap years?

Answers will vary

This is an excerpt from *High School Life: Eight Short Stories About the Ups and Downs of Adolescence*

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“Leap Day” Kayla is an average looking girl who wishes to be Beyonce-beautiful. She gets her wish, but it doesn’t turn out as planned.

“Song of the South” – Dallas receives a Chevyt S 10 from Paw Paw. Shortly afterwards, Paw Paw dies of a heart attack. Dallas is devastated, and he refuses to drive the truck again.

“A Beautiful Storm” Sydney does not know what to do when her best guy friend Eric shakes his girlfriend. Should she end their friendship even though he seems perfect in every other way?

“The Faux Girls” Maria is excited about attending Marine Biology Camp, but what happens when the other campers find out about her prosthetic leg?

“Fat Girl” Isabelle is ridiculed about her weight by a rude freshmen. One of her best friends, Eric Achebe, comes to her rescue in an unusual way.

“Twenty Eight Hours in the Life of Mia Brown” Get a peak into the life of touring actress Mia Brown. A lot can happen in twenty-eight hours.

“Do You Want Fries with That?” Lily is forced to work side-by-side with her father at Burger World after he loses his job.

“The Meanest English Teacher Ever” Amber and her friend find their mean English Teacher’s profile on a dating site. They devise a plan to pay her back for all the pain she has inflicted on their lives.