Billy Barrigan was afraid of scary movies. And scary books. Not to mention scary TV shows, scary comics, and scary backs of cereal boxes.

He also was afraid of heights, water, caves, vampires, elevators, dogs, the dark, chicken nuggets, math tests, ponies, lawn mowers, and even birthday cakes!

Come to think of it, there wasn’t much that Billy wasn’t afraid of.

Except for magic lamps.

“Aha!” Billy said, when he found a magic lamp in an old basement.

“Maybe there’ll be a genie in here.”

Actually, it was more of a jar than a lamp. And when Billy rubbed it, what popped out was more of a ghoul than a genie. It was a Nasty Little Monster.


“Yeeks!” cried Billy.

Though the monster was no more than three inches tall, it was still enough to give Billy a big scare. And when the monster scared someone, a strange thing happened. The monster grew!


This six-inch-tall monster was twice as scary as the three-inch-tall monster, so Billy shouted, “Yikes!” this time in a slightly louder voice.

And this louder voice made the Nasty Little Monster grow again. Now he was 12 inches tall—a whole foot!

“Yowks!” cried Billy, a bit more scared than he was before.

Of course, all this did was make the monster grow again. Now he was two feet tall!
tall, the size of a medium-sized dog, only he was meaner and nastier than any dog.


“YOYKS!” wailed Billy, who was getting ever more scared.

This went on for quite some time. The monster grew. And Billy got scared. So the monster grew again. And Billy got even more scared.

It kept on going until the monster was a full 16 feet tall.

“BRA-A-H-H-H-H-H!” shouted the gigantic monster, who was now so big that he would have scared anyone.

“Please,” begged Billy. “You’re scaring the daylights out of me. Tell me what you want, you Big Ugly Monster.”

“What I want is to go back to my lamp,” said the Big Ugly Monster. “But now I’m too big to fit in there.”

“What will make you smaller?” asked Billy.

“All I can tell you,” said the Big Ugly Monster, “is that fear is in your mind. If you control your fear, you can control the size of your monsters.”

“Hmm,” said Billy.

“Without your fear I am quite small,” said the Big Ugly Monster. “Nasty, but small.”

“Hmm,” Billy said again.

Then it occurred to Billy that the monster was not so scary after all. “You don’t scare me,” he said.

And with that, the monster started to shrink. From 16 feet tall, he shrank down to eight feet.

“Hey! The monster was right! I really can control my fear,” Billy thought.


“Big deal!” said Billy.

And the monster shrunk down to four feet.


“Ha!” said Billy.

They kept on doing this until the Big Ugly Monster was no longer big. In fact, he was exactly three inches tall again, and ready to jump back into his lamp.

“Wait!” cried Billy. “Before you go, I want to thank you.”

“What? You want to thank me?” said the Nasty Little Monster. “I’m a nasty little monster. No one has ever thanked me before in my life!”

“But you helped me see that I can control the size of my monsters,” said Billy.

“I did?” asked the Nasty Little Monster. Then he thought about it. “Hey, you’re right,” he said. “Maybe I’m not such a nasty monster after all.”

And with that, I’d like to say that the Nasty Little Monster turned into a nice genie and lived in the lamp forevermore, helping people and giving them three wishes.

But that didn’t happen.
The monster returned to his lamp, and Billy returned to the real world. Nothing changed, except Billy found that he was no longer afraid of such things as caves and scary movies*.

And did the monster learn anything? Not really. What did you think this was? Some kind of fairy tale?

* Chicken nuggets, however, are nothing to fool with!

1. After Billy rubs the lamp,
   - A. the monster shrinks.
   - B. the monster grows.
   - C. he becomes very frightened.
   - D. the monster appears.

2. Billy grows more frightened and then the monster
   - A. gets smaller.
   - B. gets bigger.
   - C. attacks him.
   - D. goes away.

3. Billy begins to see that fear is something that he can control after the monster
   - A. first scares him.
   - B. begins to grow.
   - C. begins to shrink.
   - D. comes out of the bottle.

4. Which of these events happens after the monster goes back into the bottle?
   - A. The monster tells Billy that he controls his own fear.
   - B. Billy laughs at the monster.
   - C. The monster begins to shrink.
   - D. Billy finds he is no longer afraid of caves and scary movies.

5. Imagine that the story is acted out as a play. You see a sixteen-foot monster on stage. What part of the show are you seeing?
   - A. The beginning
   - B. The end
   - C. The middle
   - D. It’s impossible to answer with the information given.

6. Imagine that the story is acted out as a play. You see a one-foot monster on stage. Which detail would help you figure out whether you are seeing the beginning or the end of the story?
   - A. The way Billy responds to the monster’s roar
   - B. The length of the monster’s tail
   - C. The loudness of the monster’s roar
   - D. The brightness of the stage lights

7. What is the correct sequence of events?
   1. The monster tells Billy he can control his own fear.
   2. Billy watches in horror as the monster grows larger and larger.
   3. The monster comes out of the lamp.
   4. The monster shrinks and goes back into the lamp.
   - A. 1, 3, 2, 4
   - B. 2, 3, 1, 4
   - C. 3, 2, 1, 4
   - D. 3, 1, 2, 4

8. Pick an interesting story from your own life. First, break it down into events. On a separate sheet of paper, make a list of four main events in the story. Make sure they’re in chronological (time) order. Then, write a paragraph telling the story. In the story, use some of these words: first, next, then, before, after, when, and finally.