SHQ: How do we answer comprehension questions?

Crafty was listening to the whispering from his brothers' graves.

He sat at the three-legged table, watching the shadows slither slowly towards him and staring at the far wall of the darkening cellar. Leaning against that far wall was a tall, decrepit, narrow cupboard, which without the wall's support would long ago have collapsed. Once it had been well stocked with food. Now the cupboard was bare.

Crafty had checked it every hour or so, but whenever he'd carefully pulled back the wooden doors, groaning in agony upon their rusty hinges, it was empty. He'd left the cupboard doors open now to save himself the trouble of checking, but he was sure it would never fill itself again. The magic controlling it – a porter spell that instantly sent objects over long distances – had finally faded and died. Benign Fey magic never lasted long here within the Shole; here, it was malevolent magic that ruled.

Crafty shuddered just to think of what lay outside the cellar walls, and then hunger made his stomach rumble. At least there was a fire to keep him warm and fend off a little of the cold and damp. All that remained now were glowing embers, the last of the wood from the beds of his dead brothers.

Taking his eyes off the cupboard for a moment, he glanced round at the large wooden bookcase on the other wall. One of the shelves was sagging under the weight of the books that were so precious to him. He'd read them over and over again to keep at bay the tedium of life in the cellar. Although many were gone now, fed to the fire to keep it burning, there were some he couldn't bear to sacrifice. These were the gardening books that had belonged to his mother.

A lump came to his throat as he thought of her. She'd been dead for almost a year now, but the pain of her loss was still there. He missed her badly, and the happy home she'd made for him and his brothers. But now he had to leave everything behind. He had to leave this refuge. He had to leave it or starve.

Crafty didn't want to go. He wanted to stay here, with the memories of his mother and his two dead brothers.

Brock and Ben had been twins, two years older than him. They had been good to him; looked after him – so it didn't scare him when they whispered to him. Sometimes he would kneel on the earthen floor and place his left ear close to their gravestones, listening carefully, trying to hear what they said. Sometimes he heard them calling his name.

'Crafty! Crafty! Crafty!' they whispered.

Aberrations – The Beast Awakens
by Joseph Delaney.

Words in Context

Find and highlight the following words in the text.

- Decrepit
- Benign
- Malevolent

What do you think they mean?
What words could you replace them with?

Retrieval questions

1. Where is Crafty?
2. How long had his mother been dead?
3. Did Crafty want to leave the cellar?.

Inference questions

1. Has Crafty been in the cellar a long time? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
2. Find three pieces of evidence which suggests this a fantasy story.
3. Find evidence to suggest the cupboard had previously been magical..
4. What time of day is it? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Choice questions

1. What word in the text mean 'a place of safety'.
2. The author uses personification in the 2nd paragraph – can you identify it? What effect does it have?

Challenge question

What effect does the first line of the extract have on the reader?