

Math wizard

Leo sits in his room staring blankly at his math homework. "I wish someone would help me," he sighs. He looks longingly out of the window. Outside the sun is shining. Playing soccer would be so much fun. But there is no doubt that Leo needs to finish his math homework first.

Leo turns to his notebook and gives a gasp of shock. Somehow, his homework is finished as if by magic. Unfortunately, everything is wrong. How strange. What's going on?

Leo feels a chill running down his spine. He whirls around and discovers the pale face of a living ghost - spattered all over with ink.

"Get out!" demands the ghost harshly; "math homework is mine, mine, mine!"

The rude words leave Leo speechless. He stares at the ghost with his mouth wide open.

The ghost however has even more to say. "By the way, this room is mine too," he adds shamelessly, "go away and leave me alone with my homework."

Leo finds his voice again. "Who do you think you are? I've been living in here for eight years now."

The ghost shrugs. "I myself have lived here for nothing less than six millennia," the ghost claims.

"Oh, really?" says Leo contemptuously - and taps his forehead at the ghost, "not even the pyramids have existed for that long."

"Sure thing," says the ghost calmly, "I'm MUCH older than the pyramids."

Leo's eyes open in wonder. The ghost doesn't look that ancient. Just the opposite. He seems pretty childish. But maybe there is more to it. You never know with ghosts. "So, how old are you then?" asks Leo cautiously.

"I'm eight years of age," replies the ghost proudly and draws himself up to look taller.

Leo is confused. He is not good at math, but he knows how to count. "Eight is not at all more than six thousand," he knows for sure. Maybe the ghost doesn't know how to count.

To find out, Leo holds up his right hand. "How many fingers am I showing?" he asks.

"Thirty," answers the ghost immediately.

Leo can't help but smile. He folds away two fingers. "What about now?"

"That's simple," boasts the ghost, "I see forty-five fingers."

Leo bursts into laughter. "You're awesome at counting, aren't you?" he chuckles.

"Better still," the ghost corrects him. "I'm a math wizard, you know. Alas, since there is no school for ghosts, there is not a single arithmetical task, which needs to be solved."

Suddenly the ghost does not look cheeky anymore, but very sad.

"Well, I've got an idea," Leo says, "what about being roommates and doing math homework together?"

"Agreed," answers the ghost with a cry of joy.

"Let's start right away," decides Leo. He takes out a blank sheet of paper, writes the number "1" on it and hands it over to his new friend. Then he puts the pen into the ghost's hand.

"1,1,1," writes down the ghost with a big smile on his face.

(500 words)