

## Big Screen Biggie

The young man called Biggie earned his name because of his big ego, not because of his whole body's size or shape. That might have earned him the name of Slim, Floppy, or Small-y. But if we're talking about his opinion of himself, Biggie deserved his name very much.

All of the kids Biggie's age (it would be wrong to call them 'friends') liked the movies quite a lot. But Biggie's focus on movies went far above and way beyond normal. He talked about movies to no end. He had a special knack for bringing any conversation to the topic of cinema, making any free time activity linked to acting, and quizzing people on favorite movie lines. One of his worst habits, though, was arguing the finer points of movie making with people who could not have known - or cared - any less about the topic. In fact, he often tried to have these conversations with people who had already walked away. And, with his ever-present ego, Biggie had a terrible habit of telling people over and over about his own future as a great movie star.

"Oh, did you see Flavora Spectrum in the new sequel to African Adventure? I just can't believe how awful her hair was! And could she have chosen a worse role for herself? How about the ending to that mystery Neon News? I've never seen a weaker plot end in such failure! Just wait until I break into the industry; you won't see me driving such junk around the big screen!"

That was a typical conversation with Biggie - he was the only one speaking. One could call Biggie annoying, irritating, or just plain draining the way he carried on - and people usually did. However, along with people's dislike for his behavior came a small sort of respect for the boy. He just never seemed to give up! It was just that small sort of respect that allowed people to put up with him. That and the fact that he usually knew when a good movie was coming.

It would have been hard for anyone in town, especially those within earshot of Biggie, to miss the news that a movie producer was coming to the mall to recruit young actors to play small roles in an upcoming movie. Biggie wasn't the only one excited about it, although he was surely the one most excited about it to judge from his words. He told everyone he ran into things like, "Well, finally they've come to find me. I hope you don't get too jealous when I'm having lunch with Flavora Spectrum in a few weeks. Don't worry, though, I'll always remember the little people when I make it big."

"Sure, Biggie," most people thought, "Go ahead and dream." By then they had long since gotten used to his huge ego. Even his bragging couldn't keep the excitement from

growing. The shopping mall grew quite lively on the day of the producer's arrival.

Kids were everywhere, dragging their parents around the mall, playing and hanging out all over the place. Parents were telling their kids they looked just fine and wishing them good luck as they dropped them off in the line to wait for the producer. Lots of people were there just to take in the excitement and see their friends and neighbors.

The producer was supposed to arrive at the mall at ten in the morning. He was supposed to come to a large table where the young actors had lined up to wait. At the front of the line stood Biggie, having a hard time standing still and constantly reminding the kids behind him in line to please stand back, the producer would surely not want them to interrupt this first and most important try out. When the producer arrived, the mood in the mall grew even more excited, as kids in line straightened up and peered around each other to catch a glimpse of the big movie man. Much to their surprise, when the producer arrived, she was a big movie woman.

Being first in line, Biggie might have had an edge on his competition. However, his desire to be a star, his obsession with movies, and his complete confidence that he would be chosen might have had even more to do with what happened.

"First in line. What's your name, young man?" Ms. Rolling asked.

"Byron Bragg is my real name, but my closest friends call me Biggie. Please call me Biggie, young lady. I think I like you already," he gushed.

Ms. Rolling was stunned at his words. She was shocked by his confident smile. But what really threw her was the reference to her as a young lady (given that she was obviously about five times Biggie's age) and the wink he threw in as he finished his sentence, as if he had just done her a huge favor.

At first, Ms. Rolling wasn't sure whether to laugh or be offended. She stood back a bit and examined Biggie, head to toe. Finally, she said, "You're an interesting young man, Biggie." She broke a small smile. "And I think you'll be great in our next picture. Please see Mr. Handy here for more information."

Biggie was bound for the big screen! After a long day of talking about his role in the movie with the silent security guard, Biggie went with Ms. Rolling, Mr. Handy, and a few other children to the nearby big city for two days of filming. When it was all finished, the film crew dropped little Biggie off at his house, in a flurry of his own chatter. As they shut the car door, they left him with the words, "Don't call us; we'll call you."

Biggie wasted no time telling everyone he saw that the film crew had been so impressed with his performance that they told him they would call him for future movies.

When the opening day of Biggie's movie drew near, Biggie assumed that everyone in town would join him to watch it. Biggie reminded people daily, hourly, sometimes a few

times in under a minute, of the time and location of the opening feature.

On opening night itself, the theater was packed. Kids were chatting and throwing popcorn, laughing and sharing candy. Biggie tried to ignore them as he told them all about the making of the movie and how his part was going to be the best part in it. When the movie began, Biggie grew more and more upset.

"Stop it! Quiet down! Why don't you stop it? You need to listen to this part to understand the part where I come on!"

Much to Biggie's horror, nobody was interested in stopping or staying quiet. They tried to tell Biggie to relax, but of course he had a hard time with that.

"Wait. Be quiet!" he snapped at them. "My part is coming up RIGHT NOW! You really need to see the only quality acting in the whole movie! Be quiet!"

But when Biggie's big part came up, it lasted a grand total of three seconds. The star was strolling down the dirt road through the western town, and Biggie said all of three words: "Hi there, mister!" And that was it. Biggie was shocked. He expected much more of the filming to feature his face. He wanted everything he had said on camera to appear in the movie. They had cut most of his time from the final version!

Biggie felt his face get hot. He pouted. He sank into his seat and stared at his knees. Eventually, Amy, who was sitting in the seat next to him, noticed Biggie's mood. She ducked from a flying piece of popcorn and almost bumped heads with him. "Oh, what's wrong, Biggie? Did we miss your part? Hey, Jim, share some of those Berry Chews, would you? So, Biggie, why don't you have one of these? Hey, lighten up!"

Biggie took a Berry Chew from Jim. Sadly, he put it in his mouth. He gazed at Amy, who was smiling widely and tossing pieces of popcorn a few rows back where she was pretty sure the attack on her had started. Biggie looked around at the other kids, playing and laughing, talking and sharing candy. He wondered a little bit why they had so much fun being silly.

Amy noticed his sad look again. "Come ON, Biggie, relax! Here, see if you can hit Sarah with this." She handed him a Choco-Chunk, and he stared at it for a minute. "You know you'll have other movies to be in; there are always other movies. Quick, get her now while she's not looking!"

Biggie turned around to see Sarah talking with the person behind her. He wondered if he could lob the candy over in her direction. Without thinking, he let the Choco-Chunk go, and it plopped on top of Sarah's head. She turned around startled, as Amy pulled Biggie's head down behind his seat. "Good one, Biggie!" Then she popped back up and tossed a piece of popcorn in the same direction.

Biggie couldn't help but smile. He took a deep breath and soaked in the fun that

everyone else was having. He started to forget about the movie, and about all movies, and finally he began to relax. Suddenly, a Yogurt Yum plopped on his head, and he picked it off and ate it. Biggie looked for someone with soda to steal a sip, and slowly got up to sneak one from Sam - turning away from his movie and toward a lot more fun for the evening.

**1. What was a big surprise when the movie producer arrived?**

- A. The producer was a woman.
- B. The producer was very young.
- C. The producer didn't like children.

**2. What was a typical conversation with Biggie like?**

- A. Biggie argued with the other person.
- B. Biggie was the only one speaking.
- C. Biggie asked too many personal questions.

**3. Why did people walk away from Biggie after he started talking with them?**

- A. He thought he knew about everything and said so.
- B. He only wanted to talk about himself and movies.
- C. He thought he was smarter than everyone else.

**4. What was Biggie's worst habit when talking about movies with others?**

- A. He would talk about details of movie making that no one cared about.
- B. He would tell others all about how he was going to make great movies.
- C. He would act like people weren't smart if they didn't know about movies.

**5. What kind of response was there when the movie producer arrived?**

- A. Many kids showed up to watch, but only a few tried out.
- B. Only a few kids showed up with their parents to try out.
- C. Many kids showed up with their parents to try out.

**6. What impression did Biggie give to others about a movie producer coming to town to hire some young actors?**

- A. He acted like he had arranged to have the producer come to town.
- B. He acted like he knew the producer and the other stars personally.
- C. He acted like the producer was coming mainly to discover him.

**7. What did Biggie's body look like?**

- A. Slim and small.
- B. Heavy and short.
- C. Big and tall.

**8. What did Biggie want most in life?**

- A. To have lots of friends.
- B. To be a famous movie star.
- C. To be respected by others.

**9. What was Biggie's biggest disappointment in this story?**

- A. The kids in the audience didn't listen when he asked them to be quiet.
- B. None of the kids in the theater were watching to see his part.
- C. He expected everything he said and did on camera to be in the movie.

**10. What about Biggie impressed the movie producer so much that she gave Biggie a part?**

- A. He acted very confident and spoke like he was an extremely intelligent boy.
- B. He acted like he was doing the producer a huge favor trying out for a part.
- C. The way he acted made the producer think he was a very interesting person.

**11. What was one of the only things that people seemed to respect about Biggie?**

- A. He refused to give up talking about his love for movies no matter what.
- B. He liked to tell people all about a new movie before they were able to see it.
- C. He didn't get upset when people walked away from a conversation with him.



- 12. What probably was going through Biggie's mind when he saw how small his part was in the movie?**
- A. He would probably never be given a part in a movie like he deserved.
  - B. Everyone would think he bragged up his part just to get attention.
  - C. He would give up his love for movies and never talk about acting again.
- 13. What was Biggie like?**
- A. He was very intelligent and knew the right things to say so that others would want to listen to him.
  - B. He only cared about what was important to him and didn't care what others thought about him.
  - C. He didn't understand that what was important to him wasn't what everyone else thought was important.
- 14. What was Biggie like at the end of the story?**
- A. He was having fun and not thinking about the movie.
  - B. He was taking his anger and frustration out on others.
  - C. He was having fun but couldn't get his mind off the movie.
- 15. What happened right after Biggie winked at the producer?**
- A. The producer decided that Biggie was an interesting young man.
  - B. He shocked the producer by referring to her as being a young person.
  - C. The producer was deciding whether to laugh or be offended by Biggie.
- 16. What best explains why Biggie lied to everyone when he said that he would be in future movies?**
- A. He didn't listen when the movie crew told him, "Don't call us; we'll call you."
  - B. He convinced himself that it was true because he thought he had done well.
  - C. He was sure that the movie producer said that he would be used again.
- 17. How did Amy help Biggie feel better at the movie?**
- A. She told him that no one even noticed his part in the movie.
  - B. She got him interested in something besides his disappointment.
  - C. She offered him some candy to eat and to throw at other kids.

**18. What was this story mostly about?**

- A. How a young boy found a balance between being serious and having fun.
- B. What happens when someone thinks he is more important than he really is.
- C. How hard it is to get a good part in a movie when starting out as an actor.

**19. What was Biggie like when he met the movie producer?**

- A. For the first time in his life he didn't know what to say about making movies.
- B. He was a little unsure of just how to act but made the producer laugh.
- C. He was confident and acted like he was much older than he really was.

**20. What was the main problem in this story?**

- A. Biggie was so focused on himself that he couldn't appreciate others.
- B. The movie producer led Biggie to believe that he was going to be a star.
- C. People found Biggie to be annoying, irritating, and hard to deal with.