***Helen on Eighty-sixth Street*** ***Reading Check***

1. What is Vita’s family situation?
2. What are her three wishes?
3. How does each wish turn out?
4. As Vita tells us her story, we learn a great deal about her. We find out, for example, how she feels about herself and what she wants. Find passages in which Vita reveals what she is like. Based on those passages, what would you say are her three or four most important character traits?
5. Explain how Vita feels about her father’s leaving her on her own with her mother. Does she really believe her father will return? As she deals on her own with her parents’ divorce, what do her thoughts and statements reveal about her character?
6. Describe Vita’s triumphs and losses. Which do you think are more important to her—the triumphs or the losses? Explain why.
7. Think about Vita and what she has learned by the story’s end. How would you state the theme of this story—what truth does Vita’s experience reveal to you?
8. Make a list of all the story’s allusions—references to Greek mythology, to literature, even to New York City. With a partner, discuss how you figured out the meaning of each allusion. What resources in the text helped you? Are any of these allusions still puzzling you? (For example, what are those swan’s wings at the story’s end?)