**Grade 8, Unit 6**

**Directions**

Read the following selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

*In the following excerpt, Phyllis and Charlie know the narrator’s father. They have come to Brooklyn on business and are staying in the narrator’s room.*

**\*Adapted *from* The Best Bedroom in Brooklyn**

**Carol Snyder**

When I came home from school, Phyllis greeted me at the door with a smile. She had baked chocolate-chip cookies and had a glass of cool milk ready for me. We crunched cookies and talked about boys. Then she said she'd bought a home permanent if I wanted to curl my hair and give it some body. My hair hung limply around my face. “Baby-fine hair,” my mother calls it. “Stringy and straight,” I call it. The stuff didn't smell great, but I let her do it.

I would never let my mother touch a chemical to my hair. I would be sure it would permanently frizz my hair or change its color. She once tried to cut my bangs, and I needed first aid and a month to get them to grow back straight. Phyllis can do anything. She's perfect.

My mother once offered to hem my jeans and she did great, except when I tried to put them on I couldn't because she'd sewed the leg openings together. I bet if I had a mother like Phyllis, she'd sew all my clothes just right and make me skirts and blouses in the latest styles. And I would be happy on open house night at school, when she would be the prettiest mother there and she would listen to the teacher and not ask a million questions. And I would not be embarrassed because she had on slacks that were too short because she did not have time to read the label and had put them in the dryer instead of laying them out flat to dry.

“Isn't Phyllis the greatest?” I said to my mom one night.

“Yeah, the greatest,” my mom said sarcastically. “I don't know the greatest *what* yet, but she's the greatest.”

It seemed like Phyllis and Charlie would be with us forever. In my closet, my clothes were pushed to one side and Phyllis' and Charlie's beautiful things had lots of space. And on my dresser, my things were pushed into a corner and Phyllis' make-up and polishes and brushes and lotions and other things took up all the space. It hardly even seemed like my room anymore except for the wood carving of my name, “Lisa,” that still hung on the wall.

That night, for dinner, Phyllis cooked the best roast any of us have ever tasted.

The next day, a month to the day of their arrival, Charlie insisted he take us all out to a nice restaurant in Manhattan. So Phyllis and I set out to take the train from the Avenue J station in Brooklyn to Rector Street in Manhattan, like I've done a million times.

My mom can get anywhere. She never gets lost or frightened of street people. She always gives the homeless lady at the train station some money and wishes her good luck and better times. Then the lady smiles.

Phyllis wouldn't let me stop and give her anything. And she kept asking, “You sure you know what station we get off, Lisa? You sure?” And when we had to switch trains, I thought she was going to faint.

And when some ordinary soot got on her white jacket, you'd have thought she was having a heart attack. I was really embarrassed.

When we got to my parent's store, my mom was busy helping customers, adding up bills on the machine, climbing up ladders to get some man a shirt in the right size. And old-time customers would greet her with a hug. She had this wonderful smile and could juggle three things at once and be sweet to everyone.

“Your mother is really something,” Phyllis said, “The way she talks business and uses computers and cash registers and raised a family and looks great without a ton of junk on her face. How does she do it, Lisa?” she asked.

And for the first time I saw Phyllis as she really was. And for the first time I saw my mother as she really was. Each one her own special self. Each one with different things I could learn from and add to and become my own grown-up me someday.

I ran up to my mom and I hugged her tightly. “I love you, Mommy,” I whispered in her ear. “Tomorrow could we order in from Joy Fong?” I asked.

The next day I got home from school and there was nothing baking in the oven nor any dishes in the sink. I went to my room and everything was back to “normal.” On my bed was a box with beautiful wrapping and a handmade bow. I opened the package, saving the bow. I hugged the gorgeous white angora sweater and whispered to the air, “Good-bye, Phyllis and Charlie, and thanks.”

Mom and Dad brought Chinese food home from Joy Fong and we caught up on news and Mom and Dad thanked me for being so understanding and nice to Charlie and Phyllis. And Mom said she'd asked Phyllis for her chocolate-chip cookie recipe and would also bake cookies now and then, but warned that they might not come out as light and wonderful.

“And if worse comes to worst,” I said, “we'll use them as hockey pucks." And we all laughed. Together again. Our family-as always.

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1. You can tell that this story is told from a first-person point of view because the narrator-

a. refers to herself as *I*.

b. reveals Phyllis’s thoughts.

c. is a minor character who describes the mother’s feelings.

d. is an outside observer rather than a character in the story.

2. You can infer that Lisa allows Phyllis to give her a permanent because Lisa-

a. trusts Phyllis’s sense of fashion.

b. hopes to look more like Phyllis.

c. enjoys changing her hair style.

d. wants to please her mother.

3. The flashback that takes place in lines 9 - 15 helps you understand why Lisa-

a. wants to become a dressmaker.

b. is so impressed by Phyllis.

c. likes to talk about clothes.

d. enjoys open house night.

4. In lines 13 - 14, the author characterizes Lisa’s mother by having Lisa-

a. present her mother’s private thoughts.

b. reveal how others react to her mother.

c. comment on her mother’s speech.

d. describe her mother’s appearance.

5. From Lisa’s request to order Chinese food, you can infer that she-

a. wants her life to return to its usual routine.

b. prefers eating in to going to restaurants.

c. wants to treat Phyllis to a surprise.

d. does not enjoy cooking dinner.

6. From lines 47 - 49, you can conclude that Lisa is thankful because she-

a. has regained her privacy.

b. can finally use her closet space.

c. enjoys receiving expensive gifts.

d. appreciates what Phyllis taught her.

7. We know Phyllis is a foil character because she-

1. cooks wonderful food on a daily basis.
2. helps Lisa learn to appreciate her mother.
3. symbolizes love, wealth and independence.
4. helps Lisa’s mother with household chores.

8. Explain how the story would be different if told from the mother’s point of view. Support your answer with information from the text.

**Amazon Adventure**

**By: Cheryl Block**

Sirah Patel was caught up in another round of Amazon Adventure, the hot new video game. The primary goal of the game was to find the ancient treasure of the Moche while surviving the perils of the Peruvian jungle. Sirah had just crossed the river, narrowly escaping an attack by the man-eating piranhas. He had reached the second level of play and was climbing the slopes of an old volcano.

As he reached the mouth of the crater, the volcano started to erupt. The effects were so realistic, the room started to shake. Suddenly, Sirah felt an intense pull towards the screen. He was being sucked inside the game! He threw down the controller, but it was too late. He was caught in a swirling vortex, and there was no escape. He was spinning down a dark hole, deeper and deeper until he found himself at the bottom of the crater. He was no longer playing the game, he was in it!

From the jungle above, he could hear the distant throbbing of the native drums. He didn’t know if the tribe was friendly or not, but he wasn’t sure he wanted to find out. Long ago, the natives had worshipped the volcano, throwing gold and jewels into its yawning mouth in hopes of appeasing its angry outbursts. It was very likely that their treasure was still somewhere within the bowels of this ancient mountain. But how to find it?

The smell of rotten eggs from the sulfuric fumes was overpowering, and the heat from the bubbling pools of molten lava was intense. Huge black snakes slithered in and out of crevices in the walls. But as he considered climbing back up to the top, the cries of the approaching tribesmen convinced him otherwise. Better to remain in the hot, acrid depths of the volcano than face a band of angry natives armed with spears.

He now knew that he would have to play this game for real if he hoped to return home!

1. Why did Sirah throw down the game controller?
   1. He was hoping to stop the game.
   2. He couldn’t hold onto it.
   3. He was angry for losing.
   4. He got tired of playing.
2. Sirah’s attitude at the end of the passage can best be described as-
   1. amused
   2. realistic
   3. unhappy
   4. optimistic
3. How did Sirah’s thoughts and feelings change over the course of the text? Use examples from the story to explain your answer.
4. In the second paragraph, what does the word vortex most likely mean?
   1. a whirlpool
   2. a landslide
   3. a crater
   4. a river

Grade 8, Unit 6 Analysis

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Focus | Questions |
| Characters | 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 |
| Point of View | 1, 8 |
| Review | 12 |

1. A

2. A

3. B

4. D

5. A

6. D

7. B

8. CR

9. A

10. B

11. CR

12. A

**8. Explain how the story would be different if told from the mother’s point of view? Support your answer with information from the text.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Description** |
| 2 | The response is an *adequate* explanation that shows *satisfactory* understanding of how the story would be different from the mother’s point of view supported with *relevant* information from the story. |
| 1 | The response is a *limited* explanation that shows *partial* understanding of how the story would be different from the mother’s point of view supported with *general* information from the story. |
| 0 | The response is totally incorrect or irrelevant. |

Good responses might include some of the following:

* If it were told from the mother’s point of view, the reader would gain insights into the mother’s thoughts and feelings. For example how she really feels about Phyllis and Phyllis’ relationship with her daughter. The mom also seems to have a sarcastic way of speaking. The story might include more humor. We may find out whether the mother is jealous of Phyllis and Lisa relationship.
* The reader would lose the information gained from Lisa’s point of view. Maybe her mother does not know that she embarrasses Lisa at open house with her short pants. It is also possible that the reader would not know that Lisa learned to appreciate her mother and Phyllis for who they are.

**11**. **How did Sirah’s thoughts and feelings change over the course of the text? Use examples from the story to explain your answer.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | ***Description*** |
| 2 | The response is an *adequate* explanation that shows *satisfactory* understanding of the differences between Sirah and Lisa, supported with relevant information from the text. |
| 1 | The response is a *limited* explanation that shows *partial* understanding of the differences between Sirah and Lisa, supported with general information from the story. |
| 0 | The response is totally incorrect or irrelevant. |

Good responses might include some of the following:

Sirah’s thoughts and feelings changed over the course of the text as he moved from playing the game to being in the game. He started out happy and having fun, but by the end of the story he was fearful and serious.