

Finish Line

LEVEL **E**

Comprehension Skills

Understanding Literary Elements



Continental Press

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Plot and Conflict

The **plot** means the events or action of the story. Usually, but not always, the events take place in chronological (time) order.

The plot is set in motion by a **conflict** that makes a story interesting. Sometimes the conflict is a struggle between two or more characters. It can be a conflict with nature. Or, it can be a conflict *within* a character, such as choosing to do the right thing or not.

Read the passage. Then answer the questions that follow.

Tisha bounded out of the car and knocked on the front door. She waited for Lin’s mom to answer. But Lin’s mom didn’t answer. Instead, Lin came to the door.

“Lin!” Tisha said, her eyes wide. “What are you doing? Why are you here? You’re... you’re supposed to have soccer practice!”

“I’m not feeling well,” Lin said. “Isn’t that terrible? I’m sick on my own birthday.” Tisha nodded. Lin’s mom appeared behind


her, shaking her head. “Wait a minute,” Lin said. “What are you doing here? And why is your mom here? And what’s in those bags?”

“Well,” Tisha said. “Um, I’m here to decorate for your surprise party. The guests will be here in an hour.”

“That is so sweet!” said Lin. “I wish I were feeling better to enjoy my surprise party.”

“Me, too!” said Tisha.

The conflict in this story is *mainly* between Tisha and



Plot and
Conflict

Did you answer “her bad luck”? Everything seems to be going wrong for Tisha to throw the surprise birthday party. The conflict that drives the plot is Tisha trying so hard to have a great party and nothing working out for her.

Which event starts the chain of bad luck for Tisha?

The first unlucky event is when Tisha discovers the name on the cake is misspelled. More unlucky events follow after that.

1 The conflict in this story is between—

- A Billy and his teacher
- B Billy and his mother
- C Billy and himself
- D Billy and John

Plot and
Conflict

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2 What is the point of view of the story?

- A first person
- B Billy's (third-person limited)
- C the narrator's (third-person objective)
- D all characters' (third-person omniscient)

3 Which paragraph is narrated in flashback?

- A paragraph 1
- B paragraph 2
- C paragraph 3
- D paragraph 4

Climax and
Flashback

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4 The setting (place and time) of the story is _____
_____.

5 Which of these details helps establish the setting?

- A Billy sitting at his desk
- B Billy going out to play basketball
- C Billy's heart racing at school
- D Billy seeing sunshine and blue skies

6 What kind of a boy is Billy? Explain your answer using details from Part 1 of the story.

Characters
and
Dialogue

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“Of course,” Aniz said. He played his flute. All the animals came and gathered around. The son spotted a nice fat rabbit, picked it up, and started to go home. The rabbit did not want to leave, though, and it jumped from the son’s hands and hopped away! The son went home, empty-handed and disappointed. The landlord’s other sons tried to capture a rabbit, too, but they had the same bad luck.

Finally, the landlord was fed up. “Fine!” he shouted. “I will go and catch a rabbit myself! I have to do everything around here!” The landlord walked out to the forest. Suddenly, he heard a familiar sound: It was Aniz! He was playing the flute for the animals that surrounded him!

“Aniz, my friend!” shouted the landlord. “Won’t you help your old friend find a rabbit for tonight’s dinner?”

Aniz was no fool. “You are no friend of mine, sir,” he said. And he began to play his flute louder. As he played, the animals gathered around the landlord. They formed a circle around him. Aniz shouted, “I have you trapped! Now, you must promise to always be kind and treat people with respect! If you are unkind, it can come back to haunt you, as you can see!”

The landlord was shaking in his boots. “I...I...,” he said nervously, “I promise, Aniz. I’m sorry!”

From that day forward, the landlord treated everyone with kindness and respect, because he never knew how his actions might affect him someday.

1 What is the setting of the story?

- A** a small village long ago
- B** a small present-day village
- C** a small village during the 1900s
- D** a small village in the future

2 What is the point of view of the story?

- A** first person
- B** Aniz’s (third-person limited)
- C** the narrator’s (third-person objective)
- D** all characters’ (third-person omniscient)

3 What is the *most likely* reason the old man decided to help Aniz?

- A** He felt bad for the young boy.
- B** He had extra money to spare.
- C** He was related to Aniz.
- D** He always hated the landlord.

4 Which word *best* describes Aniz at the end of the story?

- A** dull
- B** greedy
- C** confident
- D** exhausted