

Name:

Fiction: Theme & Summarizing – Q2:1

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

Finding Wilbur

Li-Jun buried his head beneath his pillow in a futile attempt to drown out the ringing telephone. Who could be calling before 8 AM on a Saturday? Through the wall, he heard his mother's groggy voice answer the phone.

"Hello...Oh my, Mrs. Kowalski...Yes, yes, I'll tell Li-Jun. I'm sure your kitten couldn't have gotten very far," Mom said. "Fifty dollars is so much. You don't need to do that."

Fifty dollars? Li-Jun bolted straight up. He'd been **coveting** the new baseball he'd seen in the sports store. Now he wouldn't have to wait until his birthday to get it. As he threw on his clothes, he called through the wall, "Mrs. Kowalski's cat is missing?"

"Wilbur, her black and white kitten," said mom. "He slipped out while she was feeding the birds."

"I'm on it," Li-Jun said.

"Ask your friends in the neighborhood to help. The more people who look, the better chance you have of finding him," suggested Dad.

No way, Li-Jun thought. I must keep this search secret. The more people who look, the less chance I have of being the one to find him...and to collect the reward.

Li-Jun scoured the yards around Mrs. Kowalski's house. He was on his hands and knees, peering under some bushes when a voice called from across the street.

"You lose something?" Jayla hollered from her bedroom window.

"No," answered Li-Jun. Technically, he wasn't lying. It wasn't him who lost Wilbur.

Unassuaged by his one-word answer, Jayla pressed on. "You're obviously looking for something. What is it?"

Jayla's **nosey** inquisition was delaying his search. He'd known Jayla all his life, and she'd never been one to let things go. Li Jun told her about Wilbur being lost, but he didn't divulge the part about the \$50 reward.

"It's supposed to snow tonight. We have to find Wilbur. I'll get dressed and meet you outside in fifteen." Jayla shut her window.

Ugh, fifty divided by two is twenty-five.

Ten minutes later, he saw Ty coming down the sidewalk to his right, and Elinor approaching from the left.

"What are you guys doing here?" Li-Jun asked.

"Jayla texted us," said Elinor. "About the missing kitten."

"We want to help," said Ty.

Ugh, fifty divided by four is...hmm...less.

Jayla ran over from across the street and joined them. She had four pillowcases slung over her shoulder. "Let's get this kitten search party started. Everyone wearing thick gloves?"

Li-Jun stuffed his bare hands in his pockets. "What do we need those for?"

"Kittens' claws are little but incredibly sharp. You might want to run home and get some," Jayla suggested.

And give you a chance to find Wilbur without me? Fat chance. "I'll be fine," said Li-Jun. "What's with the pillowcases?"

"To carry Wilbur in. We don't want to drop him." Jayla distributed the pillowcases.

Elinor unzipped her teal backpack. "I brought some supplies. A laser pointer, a long piece of yarn, and some cat treats."

"I printed off some quick posters," said Ty.

"If we put up posters, then anyone can find Wilbur," said Li-Jun.

Ty looked at him strangely, "That's kind of the point."

Li-Jun perused the "Missing Kitten" poster. There was no mention of the reward. Li-Jun had not imparted that information. The gnawing feeling in his stomach told him that maybe he should have.

"Let's spread out," said Jayla. "Ty, you hang the posters. Elinor and I will knock on doors, and Li-Jun, you continue your search outdoors."

Li-Jun closed his eyes, too embarrassed to look at them when he admitted his omission. "Guys, I'm really sorry. I didn't tell you, before, but there's a \$50 reward." He opened his eyes to gauge his friends' reaction, but they'd already taken off in search of Wilbur.

The girls split the houses, odd and even, knocking on doors. Ty affixed the posters to telephone poles and signposts. Li-Jun combed the neighborhood, looking under parked vehicles and hedges.

A man, walking his dog, spotted Li-Jun. "You looking for that lost kitten on the poster?"

"Yes sir," answered Li-Jun.

"I just saw it run into that carport. Thought Buster might scare him, so I didn't go after him myself." The man scratched his large dog behind the ear.

"Thank you so much." Li-Jun dashed to the carport. Wilbur was tucked underneath a tricycle.

"Got you." Li-Jun lunged for Wilbur. The scared kitten scratched him and ran away. Li-Jun sped after him, calling to his friends "I found him, but he got away!"

"Stop chasing him!" directed Elinor, adamantly. "He'll just run away."

"He just slipped under there." Ty pointed to a backyard tool shed.

Elinor laid out a trail of cat treats, leading from the tool shed to Jayla. "Li-Jun, flash this laser pointer under the shed to draw Wilbur out. Ty, once you see him, wiggle this yarn. And Jayla, you call to Wilbur, softly and sweetly."

They all did as Elinor directed, and little by little, Wilbur crept cautiously toward Jayla.

Elinor whispered to Li-Jun, "Move slowly and scoop Wilbur up in your pillowcase."

The hungry kitten was focused on the treats and didn't notice Li-Jun moving in on him until the boy already had him in hand. Gently, Li-Jun slid Wilbur into the pillowcase.

"We did it," Jayla cheered. "Let's bring Wilbur home."

They made their way back to Mrs. Kowalski's and rang the doorbell. Mrs. Kowalski opened the door and saw Li-Jun holding the squirming pillowcase. "Is that...?"

Jayla reached inside the pillowcase and revealed the **fluffy fugitive**.

"Oh, Li-Jun, you found Wilbur!" Mrs. Kowalski nestled the kitten to her chest.

"Actually," Li-Jun smiled at his friends, "It was a team effort."

"Oh, if I pull money from my emergency envelope I should have enough for a \$50 reward for each of you," said Mrs. Kowalski.

Jayla, Elinor, and Ty looked perplexed.

"Sorry, I didn't mention the reward earlier. Selfishly, I didn't want to share it," Li-Jun admitted, "But, keep your money, Mrs. Kowalski. Seeing you and Wilbur together is all the reward we need."

His friends all agreed.

Name:

Fiction: Theme & Summarizing – Q2:2

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

Sofia Versus the Robots

Beep Beep Beep!

Sofia groaned and rolled over on her pillow. How can it be morning already, she thought to herself. She fumbled to turn off the blaring alarm on her iPhone XXII and stumbled out of bed.

The sun was just beginning to touch the horizon as Sofia scrambled about, getting ready for a long day at work.

"Start the coffee maker," she commanded her virtual home assistant. "And turn on the radio."

"Yes, Sofia," her virtual home assistant responded.

"Thank you Rafael!" she yelled.

Rafael was the name of Google's newest virtual home assistant device. Rafael could turn on or off anything in her home. He could order her groceries and make a doctor's appointment for her. He could even play a virtual game of chess with her on her iPad. Sofia loved having Rafael's help and companionship around the house!

Sofia quickly got dressed while half listening to the radio news. The smell of freshly brewed coffee filled her small apartment and made her feel more awake.

"Good morning, USA!" said the excited voice on the radio. "Today is January 10th, 2035 and we are here to bring you the news of the day."

"The new US jobs report has been released today," the radio reporter explained.

"Another 10,000 Americans are out of work this month."

Those poor people, Sofia thought. I'm lucky to have my job.

Sofia opened up her car app on her iPhone XXII. She quickly hit the "request" button.

"Rafael, turn off the radio," she directed. "Also, turn off the coffee pot and the lights. Lock the door behind me!" With that, she ran out the door and down the stairs with her thermos of coffee in one hand and briefcase in the other.

Just as she arrived outside her apartment, the self-driving car pulled up. Self-driving cars had become the norm almost five years earlier, but she still couldn't get used to the luxury! She hopped in.

"Good morning," the car said. "Please state your destination."

Sofia told the car the address of her work and sat back as it began driving her there.

Sofia's workplace was a thirty-minute drive, so she was able to use the time to enjoy her coffee and breakfast sandwich while working on her novel. Sofia wrote mystery novels for fun but hoped to become a published author someday. She did her best writing during her morning drive to work.

Finally, the car pulled up to Sofia's building. She was right on time-- everyone used self-driving cars these days, and there were never traffic jams!

She jumped out of the car and watched it speed away to pick up the next **commuter**.

Sofia took the elevator up to the 24th floor, where the law firm she worked for was located. Sofia was a paralegal. She was responsible for helping lawyers get ready to go to court. She did research and typed up important documents. Sofia was organized and a hard worker-- she had always been successful during the ten years she had worked at this job.

Normally Sofia started her day by heading to her desk to check emails. But today was different. As soon as she stepped into the office, her supervisor Akeem pulled her aside.

"Sofia, I need to speak with you in my office." Akeem was usually a **boisterous** and cheerful man, but today his tone was **somber**, and his eyes looked worried.

Sofia nodded and followed him. She felt butterflies in her stomach. Something was wrong. She sat down in the chair across from his big desk and tried to stay calm.

"Sofia, I have some bad news."

Sofia gulped.

"The financial director of this law firm has decided to order the Para-Bot 5000."

"The WHAT!" said Sofia.

"The Para-Bot 5000. It is the latest model of an intelligent robot that performs paralegal duties. It can perform the same research as you, and it can type up reports. In fact, the Para-Bot 5000 makes fewer errors than a human paralegal."

Thoughts raced through Sofia's head.

This can't be happening.

I thought my job was safe.

I'm a good worker-- this is so unfair.

"Sofia, I'm so sorry. I tried to save your job. But this how most law firms are going to operate now. This is the future. The finance manager says it is just so much cheaper to buy the robot instead of paying you a salary every year."

"What about you?" Sofia asked. "Will you lose your job to a robot?"

"No," Akeem responded. "Not yet, at least. My job is less predictable than yours. I have to craft creative arguments to present in court. I have to think on my feet and adapt to unexpected situations in the courtroom. I have to communicate with clients. No robot can do my job... for now."

Sofia and Akeem spent the next hour discussing the future of work-- for Sofia, and for the world.

When she left the office that day-- for the last time-- exciting and terrifying thoughts danced in her head. She walked to a nearby park to sit and think.

What will I do now?

I did well in college, and I did well in my paralegal job. Akeem will write me a recommendation. Maybe I should go to law school and learn new skills so that I can become a lawyer too?

But what if someday lawyers are replaced?

I love to write. I have strong drafts of a few mystery novels. Maybe I should write full time and try to become an author?

Maybe I should train for a new career? Whatever I do, I'll need to be able to think critically, be creative, and be a strong communicator.

The world was changing fast. Work was changing fast. Sofia knew she needed to adapt. But Sofia also believed in herself and her abilities.

I am capable, she told herself. I don't know exactly what the future holds, but I will find new work. I will learn new skills. I will survive and thrive.

She pulled out her iPhone XXII and summoned another self-driving car. She hopped inside and took off, driving towards the unknown.

Name:

Nonfiction: Key Ideas & Details – Q2:3

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

Robot Invasion?

It might sound like the stuff of science fiction, but there's been a lot of talk in the news lately about the coming invasion of robots in the workplace. Headlines proclaim "The Robots Are Coming!" and ask "Will A Robot Take Your Job?" But what kind of work are robots really capable of? Let's investigate.

First, it is essential to know the difference between robots and artificial intelligence. Robots can carry out tasks on their own, but a human needs to program the robot to do so. A regular robot cannot think for itself-- it requires a human to give it instructions. Robots can do jobs like assembling a car, moving heavy boxes in a warehouse, manufacturing or building toys, or vacuuming your carpet.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the name given to computer programs that can think for themselves. AI can learn new things, solve complex problems, use logical reasoning, and make decisions. AI can do a broader range of jobs. In the future, AI might be able to write informative news articles or help you with your homework. Currently, there are AI programs that can play complicated board games like chess or compose an original song!

Robots and AI are two different things. However, they can be combined. An artificial intelligence program can be put inside a robot. This would create an intelligent robot that could also do physical tasks.

It is likely that some types of jobs will be taken by intelligent robots. The jobs with the highest risk of robot replacement are jobs that are predictable and repetitive. For example, a robot could easily be programmed to flip burgers in a restaurant kitchen or to repair a broken car engine. A robot could also take the job of a pharmacist and give you your medication.

However, there are many jobs that could be "robot proof" (at least for the near future). Jobs that require critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills will be the hardest for robots and AI to adapt to. For example, a business manager needs to be able to think of new and innovative business strategies. They also need to be able to communicate well with their employees and clients to form positive relationships. It would take some significant advances in AI for an intelligent robot to be able to take on these tasks.

Another example is teachers. Teachers need to design creative and interesting activities for their students. They also need to adapt those activities to meet the learning needs of different students. Finally, they need to have **interpersonal communication skills**. Teachers need to be able to show students empathy, patience, and emotional support. Jobs like therapist, counselor, and coach also fit into this category.

It may also be difficult for a robot to become a scientific researcher or an engineer. These jobs require people to react to unexpected challenges and develop creative solutions. Scientists need to come up with original hypotheses to try and answer tough questions about the world. Engineers need to design new structures that better meet the needs of our always changing society.

We can't say for sure how robot and AI technology will evolve in the coming years. However, it's a safe bet to assume that repetitive jobs will be the first to go. Today's young people should prepare themselves by building their critical thinking and communication skills so that they are qualified for those jobs that a robot just can't do.



Name:

Nonfiction: Key Ideas & Details – Q2:4

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

The Birmingham Children's March

The purpose of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 60's was to bring about equal rights for black Americans and end segregation. Under **segregation laws**, Blacks had separate schools, churches, public facilities, and seating sections in restaurants than Whites. They also had to sit in the back of buses. The Birmingham Children's March of 1963 was a turning point in the Civil Rights Movement which helped end segregation.

By the spring of 1963, support for the Civil Rights Movement was declining. While black communities still wanted an end to segregation, adults in those communities were afraid of **repercussions** that might occur if they protested publicly. This was especially true of those who lived in Birmingham, Alabama, where police used intimidation and force against protestors. In April, Birmingham police jailed Dr. Martin Luther King for several days for protesting the unfair treatment of Blacks. People worried that if they, too, got arrested for protesting, they'd lose income while in jail. Their employers might fire them. For working adults, there was too much to lose for them to actively join the movement.

A man named James Bevel, a member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC, an African American civil rights organization), had an idea for jumpstarting the failing Civil Rights Movement. Bevel proposed recruiting students to partake in the protests. He reasoned that children had less to lose than their parents.

Initially, Dr. King was against involving youth in the protests. However, he realized that seeing young people stand up for civil rights might rally the rest of the nation in support of their cause. For that reason, he eventually agreed to Bevel's plan.

Their recruitment efforts swept through the black high schools and colleges of Birmingham, Alabama, and other parts of the state. Through carefully guarded word-of-mouth, black students of all types were attracted to the movement, from those who worked the fields after school, to football players, class presidents, prom queens, and cheerleaders. Civil rights groups trained the students in non-violent techniques of protest.

May 2, 1963, was set as "D-day", the day more than 4,000 black students would ditch school and join the civil rights crusade against segregation. At precisely 11:00 AM, the first group of 50 students got up and left their classroom. Minutes later, 50 more students joined them. Throughout the day, organized groups of 50 students continued to abandon their schools and join the march through downtown Birmingham. They marched near City Hall, hoping to talk with the mayor about ending segregation. Instead, they were arrested and thrown in jails. However, due to their strategy of using staggered groups of 50, as one group was escorted to jail in handcuffs, another group emerged to take their place. By the end of the day, almost 1,000 students had been jailed.

The protest continued for several days. Every day, more students stood in for those who had been jailed. Inspired by the students' conviction, hundreds of adults joined the protest. With the jails filled and not enough policemen to hold back the protesting crowds, Police Commissioner, Eugene 'Bull' Connor ordered his men to use violence to end the protest. Despite being blasted by fire hoses, attacked by police dogs, and beaten by policemen, the young protestors held firm. They did not back down. They did not meet violence with violence. They sang songs of hope and freedom.



Protest observer being attacked by police dogs during a civil rights protest. - May 3, 1963

The Birmingham violence was broadcast across every news station in the US. Americans were outraged at the brutality of the attacks on the students. Birmingham authorities faced widespread criticism. Even President John F. Kennedy called on those in power in Birmingham to restore peace to the city. Under mounting pressure and public scrutiny, on the evening of May 7th, the officials of Birmingham agree to negotiate with black community leaders. The next day, King declared a temporary truce, suspending the protests.

Finally, on May 10th, an agreement was reached. The city proposed a plan to slowly implement desegregation efforts over the next 60 days. Signs that labeled public facilities like water fountains and restrooms for 'Colored' or 'Whites' would be taken down. They'd end discriminatory hiring practices, such as advertising a position for 'Whites only.' Seating in restaurants would be integrated.

They also agreed to release all the protestors from jail. The Birmingham Board of Education called for the suspension or expulsion of all students who participated in the march. However, their ruling was overturned in federal court. Despite their young age, the students of Birmingham accomplished something their parents could not. They stood together against segregation and won.

A Change of Tune

Monday

Zoey was about to write her name on the school talent show sign-up sheet when Steven slid in front of her.

"You sure you want to come back for another beating?" Steven clicked his pen, then signed his name with a flourish in the top slot.

Zoey's best friend, Liv, came to her defense. "Last year was a fluke, Steven, and you know it. You won by default because Zoey was battling laryngitis."

"Yeah, right," sneered Steven. "And I suppose laryngitis caused her to flub her F chord, too?"

Zoey winced, remembering the inharmonious moment when her index finger failed to barre across all six guitar strings properly. Zoey took a deep breath, letting go of that **discordant** memory with her exhale. With her confidence restored, Zoey swiped back at him. "It's easy to hit all the right notes when your fingers never venture outside their comfort zone. I'd find strumming the same three-chord progression, over and over again, monotonous, but I guess you like playing it safe."

"Tough talk from someone who could barely squeak out a lyric last year," Steven volleyed back. "You want a challenge? It's on...on stage that is!"

Zoey marched up to the sign-up and added her signature. "See you at auditions, Steven. Come on, Liv. Bekah and James are waiting for us at lunch."

Tuesday

Zoey stood outside the auditorium with Liv, Bekah, and James, waiting for her name to be called. The hallway was crowded with fellow auditioners. Steven sat against the windows, practicing his guitar riffs.

"That sounds like more than three basic chords," said Liv.

Zoey had to admit, Steven was a lot better than she'd expected. She'd assumed he was a novice guitarist. But the way his fingers worked his guitar's steel strings, he was more proficient than she'd thought.

"Don't worry, Zoey," said James, as if reading her thoughts. "You're really talented, so don't fret. Ha! Fret...get it? Fret, as in 'worry' and fret as in 'guitar fret'...the strips across the neck of your guitar?"

Zoey groaned and rolled her eyes at her friend's corny joke. Still, she appreciated his attempt at a humorous pep talk.

"What song are you going to do?" asked Bekah.

"It's an original composition," said Zoey.

"Mine too," interjected Steven from across the hallway.

"Eavesdropper," snapped Liv. "We're having a private conversation."

"It's a public hallway," replied Steven.

"You both write music?" commented Bekah. "You two should collaborate sometime."

Steven and Zoey reacted simultaneously: "With him, no way?"/"With her, never?"

"Jeesh," shrugged Bekah. "It was just an idea."

"A terrible one," said Steven.

"Dreadful," agreed Zoey.

Ms. Martinez, the school music teacher, peeked her head out the auditorium door. "Zoey White...you're up. Steven Schwartz, **you're on deck.**"

Zoey took a deep breath and headed inside. Neither Zoey nor Steven wished the other good luck.

Wednesday

A throng of students clustered around the bulletin board where Ms. Martinez had posted the audition results. Zoey and Liv maneuvered their way through the crowd, while James and Bekah waited at the perimeter.

"So, did you make it?" James called to Zoey.

"She did!" Liv shrieked, jumping up and down. "So did, Steven," she added, less enthusiastically.

Zoey and Liv rejoined James and Bekah outside the cluster.

"How many people made it?" asked Bekah.

"About twenty acts in total," said Zoey.

"That's a lot," said James.

"The number's irrelevant," Liv stated. "You're better than all them, Zoey. Especially, Steven."

Zoey wished she shared Liv's unwavering confidence in her. In truth, she didn't know how she stacked up against the competition since they'd all auditioned privately. She'd find out tomorrow, during the rehearsal.

Thursday

"Everyone, take your seats in the order of the line-up," directed Ms. Martinez, as the students filed into the auditorium.

Ugh, thought Zoey. She was slated for last, and Steven was to perform right before her. That meant she'd have to sit next to her nemesis during the entire rehearsal.

Zoey was enthralled by the talent that took the stage. In addition to fellow musicians, there were baton twirlers, acrobats, dancers, magicians, a ventriloquist and even a dog trainer. In a sea of fierce competitors, Steven was one of the best.

"What'd you think?" Steven asked Zoey when the rehearsal was over.

Whoa, was Steven really asking for her opinion? "About your act specifically, or the rehearsal overall?"

"Both," Steven replied.

"They're all really good," said Zoey.

"I know," Steven's voice quivered with anxiety.

"Your song's really catchy, but..." Zoey paused, unsure if she should continue.

"But what?" pressed Steven. "If you have some constructive criticism, let's hear it."

"Okay, let me show you." Zoey pulled out her guitar and began strumming. "When you bridge to the chorus, instead of going from C right into E Minor, insert a bar of F Major 7 in between.

Steven's eyes went wide. "Wow, that does sound better. Great idea!"

"Have any feedback on my song?" Zoey asked hesitantly, not certain she wanted his critique. Her song was her baby, and she felt protective of it. She felt like the mother of a newborn, afraid that someone was about to call her infant ugly.

"Your song was amazing, but I felt like the lyrics were a little off in the second verse," said Steven.

"Off how?" asked Zoey, defensively.

"Well, you're singing about having inner fire and sparking change. So, instead of rhyming 'remember' with 'December', how about tweaking the lyrics so that it rhymes with 'ember.' That way it ties back to the fire theme."

"Oh my gosh, I love it," said Zoey. "Thanks for the suggestion."

"Uh-oh," said Steven, mockingly. "Did we just collaborate?"

"I think we did." Zoey winked.

Friday

"You did what?" Liv exclaimed, skeptically. "You told the enemy how to beat you? Don't you care about winning anymore?"

"I do," said Zoey. "But I also care about making good music."

Liv shook her head. "I don't get it. You've been bitter **rivals** for a year; now you're giving him a tutorial on how to trounce you?"

"Maybe we never should have become **adversaries**," asserted Zoey. "He won fair and square. I should have just said 'congratulations' and been done with it."

"You'll get your chance to congratulate him soon enough when he beats you for the second year in a row," scoffed Liv.

"I might still win," said Zoey. "My song is good, too."

"Uh-huh." Liv zipped up backpack. "I got to get home."

That night, as Zoey practiced her song, her fingers kept finding their way to the chords in Steven's song. His composition really was infectious. If she fiddled around with it, she bet she could make it even better.

Saturday - backstage, before talent show

Ms. Martinez clapped her hands to get everyone's attention. "We're about to open the auditorium and let in the audience."

Zoey tightened her grip on her guitar case. Almost show time! Liv dressed all in black as part of the crew, gave her friend's hand a good luck squeeze.

"Take your places, every—"

Ms. Martinez got cut off by a ringing telephone. Steven's telephone.

Do-do-do-do-do-do-do.

"Mr. Schwartz," Ms. Martinez scolded. "You know the rules. No cell phones backstage."

"But, it's my dad. He's calling to wish me good luck," said Steven.

"Take the call in the hallway," Ms. Martinez directed. "Everyone else, places."

Steven set down his guitar case and stepped out. Zoey noticed Liv's eyes following him out the door.

"What are you looking at?" asked Zoey.

"Opportunity," said Liv.

"What?"

"Never mind," Liv gave Zoey a hug. "I have a feeling tonight will be your night."

Saturday - backstage, during the talent show

Each act was as good as the next, however, in Zoey's opinion, there was no clear standout. But then Steven had yet to take the stage. He was up next. Standing in the wings, she peeked through the curtains and saw her parents seated in the second row.

Steven eased up beside her. "Nervous?"

"Extremely," Zoey admitted.

"Me, too," Steven acknowledged. "But in a good way, you know what I mean?"

Zoey nodded. "Um, your dad couldn't get off work to attend the show?"

Steven's eyes took on a distant glaze. "No. He's in the military. Stationed overseas in Iraq. It's like 3 AM there, but he called to wish me good luck."

"But your mom's here, right?" Zoey consoled.

Steven shook his head. "My little brother has the flu, so my mom had to stay home with him. Guess I don't have much of a cheering section."

"You have at least one," said Zoey. "Me."

"I like not hating your guts," said Steven.

"Me too," laughed Zoey. "Now get out there and slay that song."

Saturday - Steven's Act

As soon as Steven hit the stage, it was obvious to Zoey that something was awry. He strummed his guitar for a final tuning, and it sounded way off. As he adjusted the tension of his strings, one of them snapped.

Zoey heard Liv laugh beside her. "Looks like Steven's winning act is coming unraveled."

"Did you do something?" Zoey speculated.

"Just swapped the order of the first two strings," said Liv. "You know, they look practically identical? Can't tell they've been restrung out of order...until it's too late."

"Why would you do this?"

"You'd lost your competitive edge," said Liv, coolly. "So, I just gave you a little help."

"This isn't help! You sabotaged him." Zoey couldn't believe her friend would stoop so low.

"Don't be so dramatic. All I've heard from you for the past year is how much you wanted to beat Steven, now you can," Liv reasoned.

"I thought you believed in me?" flashed Zoey.

"I do!" Liv stated, emphatically.

"But you didn't think I could win without cheating?" accused Zoey.

"I...I didn't think of it that way," Liv stammered.

"Well, you should have!" Zoey grabbed up her guitar and darted onto the stage, joining Steven in the spotlight.

"Come to usher me off the stage?" whispered Steven, dejectedly.

"No," Zoey thrust her guitar in Steven's direction. "Here, use mine."

"I can't." Steven groaned. "I've never played a nylon-string guitar before. Only steel. If I try to play yours, it won't sound right."

"If you can't, I can," Zoey offered. "Last night, when I should have been practicing my own number, I couldn't get your song out of my head. As I said, it's really catchy. I'm iffy on your lyrics, but I know all the chords by heart. You sing, I'll play."

Steven nodded.

Zoey stepped up to the microphone, "Ladies and gentlemen, there's been a slight change in the program. Instead of two solo acts, Steven and I will be performing a duo."

From opening chord to the final lyric, the audience was captivated by their performance. At the end, the crowd was on their feet in a standing ovation.

"Think we won?" asked Steven, as they took their bows.

"You know what?" Zoey responded. "I couldn't care less."



Name:

Fiction: Plot & Character Development – Q2:6

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

Androcles and the Lion

(based on the Aesop fable)

Characters

- NARRATOR
- ANDROCLES
- LION
- DEER
- GUARD 1
- GUARD 2
- MASTER CASSIUS
- EMPEROR
- CROWD MEMBERS

SCENE I - Forest

[Stage Set: A forest, including a large tree stump. There is tall grass, that LION (actor/actress dressed all in tan, with paw gloves and booties and a mane) is laying behind, blending in with the background. NARRATOR stands in front corner, wearing black robes.]

NARRATOR: Long ago, in Ancient Rome, a slave named Androcles (*pronounced AN-dro-cleez*) escaped from his cruel master.

[ANDROCLES runs onto the stage. He is dressed in a white toga, with a broken chain around his ankle.]

NARRATOR: He ran into the forest to hide.

ANDROCLES: *(pants, out of breath)* I don't think...anyone...followed me. Master Cassius (*pronounced CASH-us*) will be so mad when he discovers I've escaped. *(laughs)* I can't believe it. I'm finally free! Master Cassius can wash his own smelly togas from now on. Find someone else to massage his gnarly feet, and pick up the olive pits he spits on the floor. I'm never going back. Never! I'm not going to live the rest of my life as a slave to that cruel man, I'd rather die.

LION: *(raises head over the grass, and ROARS.)* Roar!!!

ANDROCLES: *(to audience, nervously)* What I said about dying...I didn't mean quite so soon!

[LION roars again, louder and longer than before. ANDROCLES removes a sandal, and throws it at LION.]

ANDROCLES: Stay back, fearsome beast. The rest of me smells even worse than my sandal, I assure you. Master rarely allowed me the luxury of bathing.

Fiction: Plot & Character Development – Q2:6

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

[A DEER (actor/actress dressed all in brown, wearing antlers) enters the stage, unaware of the lion. She bends down right near LION to nibble on the grass. LION rises up on its haunches, ready to pounce, but instead crumples down with a whimper. DEER runs off stage]

ANDROCLES: That's weird. Why didn't he pounce on the deer? Maybe he's hurt. (calls to the NARRATOR) Hey, you there!

NARRATOR: (confused) Me?

ANDROCLES: Yes, you look like a brave individual. How's about going over there to check on the lion to see what's wrong with him?

NARRATOR: No can do. I'm not in this fable; I'm just the narrator. The role of hero belongs to you, Androcles, so get on with it.

[ANDROCLES inches his way towards LION]

ANDROCLES: Nice kitty...nice kitty...

[ANDROCLES scoots even closer, closing his eyes, making prayer hands]

ANDROCLES: (in a squeaky, rapid whisper) Please don't eat me, please don't eat me.

[When ANDROCLES and the LION are face to face, LION raises a giant paw. ANDROCLES, thinking LION means to attack him, cowers and closes his eyes. Instead, LION extends his paw to ANDROCLES, revealing a large thorn.]

LION: (makes a pleading noise)

ANDROCLES: (opens his eyes, pats down himself from head, arms, chest, legs) I'm still alive. All my body parts, intact.

LION: (gently wiggles his drooping paw)

ANDROCLES: Oh, that's a nasty thorn you got there.

LION: (whimpers)

ANDROCLES: That must hurt. I bet you want that out of there, don't you?

LION: (whimpers and nods)

ANDROCLES: It's almost like you understand me.

[LION thrusts his paw at ANDROCLES, emphatically]

ANDROCLES: Okay, okay! I know what I have to do. (pauses, then addresses the audience) Can I get a volunteer from the audience to come up and remove the thorn, preferably someone with excellent health insurance?

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Name:

Fiction: Plot & Character Development – Q2:6

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

NARRATOR: *(shakes head)* Androcles, they're not in this fable either. It's all you. You got this. You're the man.

ANDROCLES: I'm the man. *(letting the phrase sink in)* I'm the man.

[ANDROCLES reaches his hands out gingerly toward the paw, but in a panic, yanks them back]

ANDROCLES: Maybe it will fall out on its own.

LION: *(flails about melodramatically, moaning and wailing)*

NARRATOR: Come on, Androcles, we have three more scenes still to do, go on.

ANDROCLES: Three more scenes? Am I alive in them?

NARRATOR: You have to remove the thorn to find out.

ANDROCLES: *(takes a deep breath)* All right, I'm just a little nervous. This is my first thorn-ectomy, and I don't have any medical training. Unless you count, filing the warts and callouses on Master's feet. You think this thorn is nasty? Master has a wart that's so ugly...

NARRATOR: Quit stalling.

LION: *(flails about even more melodramatically, moaning and wailing, rolling his head)*

ANDROCLES: *(to LION)* Fine, I'll help you, but I need you to calm down first. Can you do that?

LION: *(settles down and makes a whimpering sound, lays his paw in ANDROCLES's hand, and looks away)*

ANDROCLES: Hold still. *(ANDROCLES grabs the thorn with both hands)* I am going to pull it out on three. One...two...three!

[ANDROCLES yanks on the thorn. At first, it won't budge. LION moans as a tug-of-war over the thorn ensues. As the thorn finally comes out, LION, gives an especially loud roar. ANDROCLES fall backward, sending the thorn sailing into the audience]

ANDROCLES: *(still on the ground, looks to the audience)* You keep that. Souvenir. *(winks, then gets back up)*

[LION prowls towards ANDROCLES]

ANDROCLES: Hey, there big fellow. Feeling better I see? You do know it's bad manners to eat your medical practitioner? I'll just be on my way...

[LION opens his mouth wide, seemingly to bite ANDROCLES's leg. Instead, he bites off the chain that's around his ankle and lays it at ANDROCLES's feet. LION also retrieves ANDROCLES' thrown sandal, nudging it to him with his head]

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ANDROCLES: Thank you. *(rubs his ankle, puts on his shoe)* That's the first time anyone's done anything nice for me in my entire life.

[LION nestles its head to ANDROCLES hand, like an adoring kitten. ANDROCLES pets the LION gently.]

ANDROCLES: You know what? That makes you my first and only friend.

SCENE 2 – Forest

[Stage Set: ANDROCLES sleeps curled up on the stump. LION lies on the ground beside him. Sandals are on the ground beside the stump.]

NARRATOR: The odd friendship between Androcles and the lion continued long after the lion's paw healed. Their forest home offered everything they needed: food, water, freedom. A nearby stream teemed with fresh water for both drinking and bathing. Androcles did not go hungry, either, for the lion was a skilled hunter, and always shared his food with Androcles. And, the Lion kept a watchful eye out for anyone who might want to harm Androcles.

[Twig snaps from offstage. LION raises its head and looks toward the sound of the snapped twig. ANDROCLES sleeps on. Voices of GUARD 1 and GUARD 2 talk off-stage]

GUARD 1: Strange. Do you see those two sets of footprints?

GUARD 2: One human, obviously, but the second? A bear maybe? As if they're walking side-by-side.

GUARD 1: *(laughs)* What do you think? We're living in a fairy tale?

NARRATOR: *(raises hand beside mouth, whispers loudly to audience)* An Aesop's fable, actually.

GUARD 2: *(laughs)* You're right. The idea of a human and ferocious beast walking in harmony is pretty far-fetched. The poor fellow was probably chased and devoured.

[LION nudges ANDROCLES awake. ANDROCLES sits up. LION whimpers, nods offstage]

ANDROCLES: What is it, my friend? What's wrong?

GUARD 1: I bet Cassius would reward us handsomely if we brought back a bear for a bear skin rug.

GUARD 2: Indeed. Let's go bear hunting. The tracks lead over there.

[ANDROCLES gets up hurriedly]

Name:

Fiction: Plot & Character Development – Q2:6

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

ANDROCLES: We have to get out of here. Run!

[ANDROCLES slips his feet into his sandals but doesn't take time to fasten. As ANDROCLES and LION run, ANDROCLES's foot slips out of his sandal, and he falls to the ground.]

ANDROCLES: *(rubs his ankle)* Ow, I think I sprained it.

[LION tries to help ANDROCLES up, offering his body for ANDROCLES to lean on. ANDROCLES pulls himself up, takes a small step, winces, and collapses back down.]

ANDROCLES: It's no use; I can't walk on it. You go on!

[LION shakes his head]

ANDROCLES: You aren't meant for a life in chains...no one is...get out of here!

[LION settles down next to him]

ANDROCLES: *(sighs)* Get away from me, you stupid animal! *(hitting and pushing LION)* I should never have stopped to help you. This is all your fault. You're just a hideous beast. I want nothing to do with you. Get away! Go!

[LION whimpers, gets up, turns to leave]

ANDROCLES: That's right. Keep going. I never want to see you again.

[LION shakes head, sadly, then sulks off-stage in the opposite direction of the voices]

ANDROCLES: *(in a whisper)* Good luck, my friend.

[GUARD 1 and GUARD 2 enter the stage]

GUARD 1: That's not a bear it's...

[ANDROCLES turns toward them]

GUARD 1 & GUARD 2: Androcles?

GUARD 2: So, this is where you ran off to. You know, Master Cassius misses you, terribly.

ANDROCLES: At least you got the terrible part right.

GUARD 1: Get up. It's time for a homecoming. *(to GUARD 2)* Runaway slaves fetch an even larger sum than wild animals.

[ANDROCLES gets up, apparently uninjured. He walks toward the side of the stage where LION exited]

GUARD 2: Where do you think you're going?

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ANDROCLES: Just retrieving my sandal.

[ANDROCLES bends down and picks up his sandal]

ANDROCLES: *(looking sadly offstage)* Good-bye.

GUARD 1: Who are you saying good-bye to?

ANDROCLES: *(sighs)* Freedom...only freedom.

[GUARD 1 grabs ANDROCLES while GUARD 2 chains his hands behind his back. GUARDS lead him offstage.]

SCENE 3 – Master Cassius' Home

[Stage Set: Set is painted with columns and marble statues. MASTER CASSIUS lies on a lounge chair, a bowl of olives beside him. GUARD 1 and GUARD 2 drag ANDROCLES on stage and throw him onto the ground.]

MASTER: Androcles? My, this is a delightful surprise. So nice to have you back where you belong...on the ground at my feet.

GUARD 1: We found him hiding out in the forest.

MASTER: Living off the land, like some wild animal, no doubt. Well, you're home now, Androcles.

ANDROCLES: This isn't my home. It's my prison.

MASTER: Insolent ingrate. I've cared for you since your birth, and never so much as a 'thank you'.

ANDROCLES: Cared for me? Thank you? For what? Working my parents to death and rendering me an orphan? Keeping me in chains? Starving me?

MASTER: I gave you a free place to live.

ANDROCLES: It's not free if the cost is my freedom! It's a price I'm not willing to pay any more.

MASTER: Is that so?

[MASTER plucks an olive from the bowl. He sucks the fruit off the olive then spits the pit onto the floor.]

MASTER: *(to ANDROCLES)* Pick it up.

ANDROCLES: No.

Name:

Fiction: Plot & Character Development – Q2:6

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

MASTER: I said pick it up!

ANDROCLES: And I said, 'no'.

MASTER: *(gasps)* Your time in the woods has turned you into a savage.

ANDROCLES: I'm no savage. You are. And my time in the woods was the best time of my life. The only time I've experienced kindness and friendship.

MASTER: Friendship? Who helped you? Assisting a runaway slave is a crime. Guards, did you see anyone nearby?

GUARD 2: He was alone when we found him.

GUARD 1: Wait a minute, no he wasn't. *(points to NARRATOR)* She was there.

NARRATOR: Now hold on. As I told, Androcles, I'm not part of this story, I'm just the narrator.

MASTER: Sounds like you just confessed to talking to him.

NARRATOR: What? No...

MASTER: Guards, seize her.

[GUARDS cross the stage and grab NARRATOR]

ANDROCLES: Let her go. She's telling the truth. She had nothing to do this with.

MASTER: Then give me the person's name. Or I'll have her thrown in jail...or worse.

ANDROCLES: There was no person, I swear to Zeus!

MASTER: Liar! You said a friend showed you kindness. Tell me who it was, or Nora here gets it.

NARRATOR: It's not Nora; it's NAIR-RATE-TOR. Please, don't kill me, I have the closing line of the play.

MASTER: Her life is in your hands, Androcles. Who was your friend?

ANDROCLES: It was...a lion.

[GUARD 1 & 2 start laughing]

MASTER: Do you take me for a fool? Fine, don't tell me, but you'll be taking your secret to the grave. Guards, bring them both to the Coliseum. If he's so friendly with the lions, let's see how he fares with them there, in front of a bloodthirsty crowd.

[MASTER moves to exit stage, as do the GUARDS, dragging ANDROCLES and NARRATOR]

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NARRATOR: Wait!

MASTER: What is it? Wanting to beg for your life?

NARRATOR: No, not that. We can't end scene 3 this way.

MASTER: Say what?

NARRATOR: I'm serious. We can't leave the stage. Not with that olive pit on the floor. That's littering.

MASTER: Guards, pick up that pit.

GUARD 2: We kind of got our arms full. *(gestures at NARRATOR and ANDROCLES)*

MASTER: Ugh, very well!

[MASTER picks up the pit and they all exit the stage]

SCENE 4 - Coliseum

[Stage Set: Coliseum background. CROWD MEMBERS are dressed in simple white togas. CROWD MEMBERS whisper to one another, excitedly. To the side of the stage is a cage door. MASTER is seated prominently. GUARDS stand in to side holding ANDROCLES and NARRATOR. EMPEROR stands up and waves to the crowd.]

EMPEROR: Friends...Romans...Countrymen, welcome to my glorious Coliseum. I'm the Emperor of Rome, and I'll be your emcee for today's festivities.

[CROWD MEMBERS grow silent.]

EMPEROR: You're in a real treat, folks. In this corner *(gestures toward ANDROCLES and NARRATOR)* escaped slave, Androcles, and his accomplice, Nora...

NARRATOR: I'm not Nora. And I'm not his accomplice. This is so messed up. I shouldn't be here.

EMPEROR: My dear, if I had a silver coin every time someone claimed to be here by mistake, why, I'd be the Emperor of Rome. And, what do you know, I am the Emperor of Rome. *(to the crowd)* Come on, crowd. Let's give up for these doomed souls.

[CROWD claps politely. GUARDS release NARRATOR and ANDROCLES. GUARDS hand NARRATOR and ANDROCLES each a small spear and take a seat]

EMPEROR: And in this corner, *(gestures to cage door)*, newly arrived today...the fearsome...the formidable...the ferocious, and very, very hungry...Lion!

[CROWD cheers wildly. Cage door raises. LION emerges, sniffs the air, then charges toward ANDROCLES and NARRATOR. ANDROCLES pulls NARRATOR behind him.]

Name:

Fiction: Plot & Character Development – Q2:6

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

LION: (roars ferociously)

[ANDROCLES sticks out his tiny spear toward the charging LION and clenches his eyes shut. LION charges up to ANDROCLES but stops when it gets close. Sniffs. Tilts head to the right, then to the left. Then LION nudges ANDROCLES's hand with his head.]

ANDROCLES: (opens eyes) Lion? Is that you, my friend?

[LION presents the paw that had had the thorn in it, and nods. ANDROCLES falls to his knees and gives LION a big hug.]

ANDROCLES: I've missed you, greatly. I'm so sorry for all the terrible things I said. I didn't mean them. Not a one. I just couldn't bear to see you lose your freedom because of me.

EMPEROR: What's going on here?

ANDROCLES: (makes introductions with a casual air) Emperor...Lion. Lion...Emperor. Lion and I are friends, kind of a funny story how we met. He had a thorn in his paw, I thought he would eat me alive, I pulled it out anyway, we became friends, yada, yada, yada, and now fate has reunited us.

MASTER: (shocked whisper) He was telling the truth.

NARRATOR: (peeks out from behind ANDROCLES) So was I. I really am just the narrator.

EMPEROR: You really are quite remarkable.

NARRATOR: Thank you.

EMPEROR: Not you...Androcles. What are you doing here, anyway? Don't you have a play to wrap up? You're dismissed.

NARRATOR: Thank you, your Emperor-ror-ror-ness. (smiles nervously, curtsies, returns to the corner of the stage where she was narrating from).

EMPEROR: (in a loud, deep voice) Ladies and gentlemen, I have an imperial proclamation. No man who can tame the king of the beasts should be enslaved. (to ANDROCLES) Androcles, I grant you your freedom. From this day forward, you are no longer a slave. You are free to go!

MASTER: That's not fair. You can't do that!

EMPEROR: Do you dare contradict the Emperor of Rome? Guards, seize that man and take him to prison.

[GUARDS 1 & 2 grab MASTER and drag him off stage]

ANDROCLES: (bows to EMPEROR) Your Majesty, I'm most grateful. But I can't go, not without my friend here. (scratches LION on the head)

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Fiction: Plot & Character Development – Q2:6

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

EMPEROR: Mighty lion, I grant you your freedom, as well. Actually, I've been having second thoughts about this whole "lion tearing people limbs off and devouring their insides" thing. It's rather poor sportsmanship to eat your opponent. So, I'm thinking of doing what those guys in Greece are doing. A big sporting event, called the Olympics. Let me tell you about it. There are these rings, see, four, no five of them, I think...

LION: *(Roars ferociously)*

ANDROCLES: Sorry, your Imperial Highness, the Olympics sound great. I'm sure they'll be a big hit, but Lion and I best be going.

EMPEROR: Of course. *(to Androcles)* Good day, sir. *(to LION)* And to you, your Majesty.

[ANDROCLES exits with LION]

NARRATOR: And so Androcles and the lion returned to the forest, where they lived the rest of their days in friendship and freedom. And the narrator *(removing her robes, revealing street clothes)* went on a long overdue vacation.

[NARRATOR exits stage]

THE END

Name:

Nonfiction: Point of View – Q2:7

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

Online News: How to Tell If It's Real or Fake

The term "Fake news" has gotten a lot of attention. Yet there's confusion and disagreement over what type of news fake news refers to.

By its simplest definition, fake news is news that's untrue. Fake news is not the same as a news story that unintentionally contains an error. Even news sources with high ethical standards occasionally make mistakes. When that happens, real news sources will **retract** the story and/or make corrections. With fake news, the inclusion of misleading and **erroneous** information is no mistake; it's intentional. At legitimate news sources, reporters who write stories with false information may even lose their jobs. With fake news, writing stories with false information is their job!

With so many online news sources, how do you know which ones to trust? There appears to be no one-size-fits-all answer. Some people distrust traditional news organizations (also referred to as the "mainstream media" or MSM) and prefer newer voices. Some people only trust well-established news outlets they're familiar with. Whatever, your source of news, it is important to be able to tell if what you are reading is real or fake. Here are some clues to help you decipher whether a story is factual or pure fiction.



Characteristics of Legitimate News

- **Attribution.** Credible news stories include an author's byline, a dateline (when and where the story originated), and facts, figures, and quotes attributed to specific people or groups.
- **Standards and ethics.** Credible news adheres to specific standards of ethics and professional behavior. Their code of ethics is typically published somewhere on their website.
- **Opinion pieces are differentiated from news stories.** An article that expresses the writer's views and perspectives is clearly labeled as an opinion piece or an "op-ed" (opinion editorial). News stories report facts objectively. In op-eds, the writer interjects his or her own opinion on the subject matter and writes in first person (using "I"). Objective news stories are written in third person.
- **Trustworthy research and statistics.** Studies and statistics cited in articles describe their methodology. Scientific data and findings come from reputable labs (such as those affiliated with universities) or independent non-profits. The researchers are unbiased and have no financial incentive to skew the data in a particular direction. The research should be "peer-reviewed," meaning other reputable scientists have read and signed off on the methods used to collect data.

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Characteristics of Fake News

- **Advertorial.** Advertorials mimic traditional news but are paid for by an advertiser. Look for fine print with the words "paid for by" or "sponsored content."
- **Viral videos.** Not all viral videos are fake. But some videos shared virally via social media are misleading. Videos may have been edited to include only specific video and audio clips. Scenes have been spliced together out of context which can misrepresent what actually occurred or was said.
- **Unusual URLs.** Fake news sources may be masquerading as legitimate sites you already know. The most familiar web addresses end with ".com," ".net," ".gov," ".org," ".mil," and ".edu". You can tell they're not the real thing if they've tacked on something like ".co" to the end of the URL.
- **Low-quality writing.** Look for words in all caps, glaring grammatical or spelling errors, and sentences that end with more than one punctuation mark, such as double or triple exclamation points or question marks. These are clues that you should be skeptical of the source.
- **Clickbait.** Clickbait headlines use words and phrases like "shocking," "this will blow your mind," "you won't believe," and "the secret they don't want you to know". Sensational headlines usually lead to false or dubious content. Clicking these headlines often redirects to ads, contests, surveys, viruses, business scams, and content unrelated to the headline.
- **Unflattering photos.** Websites and magazines with a particular bias or extreme view run photos of those they oppose caught mid-sneeze, frowning, and blinking. Legitimate news sources strive to use images that illustrate the main idea of a story.
- **Guilt by association.** Fraudulent news sources place unrelated photos side by side to make the subjects seem to be behaving inappropriately. They photoshop the subjects in two separate photos to make them appear to be next to each other.
- **Unnamed author and sources.** Writers of fake news don't reveal their identity. They don't want people to know who they are. The article may be attributed to anonymous or use an obvious pseudonym, like the name of a character from a movie. They make up fictitious quotes and don't provide the name of the person who said them.
- **Lone Wolf.** Does the story not appear anywhere else? Real news stories are usually covered by more than one news source. They may claim to have a "scoop" that other news sources won't report. But the real reason you won't find it anywhere else is because it's fake news.

Name:

Fiction: Point of View – Q2:8

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

The Football Spy

Not much goes on in a small town, but it doesn't mean life is dull. Back when I was a kid in Havers Mill, there was always something interesting happening. Like that time we thought Mrs. Strickland was a spy.

One day, my foster brother Liam and I were walking home from football practice and talking about how Coach Walters had utterly rearranged the starting lineup for Friday's game. Suddenly, Liam stopped short. "That's Old Lady Strickland's place," he whispered, gazing at Mrs. Strickland's tiny house.

I cringed at the disrespectful nickname. Liam was a nice kid, but sometimes he forgot to be polite. Dad always said I should gently remind him when he said something **uncouth**, just like Dad had always done for me.

"You mean Mrs. Strickland?" I asked, hoping Liam would take the hint.

He didn't. "Yeah. Old Lady Strickland. I think she's a spy."

"What kind of spy?" I asked, skeptical.

"A football spy," he replied. "Maybe for Lanville's team. I saw her sitting in the bleachers at practice today, and she had a notebook she was writing in." Just then, he turned sharply and went directly up Mrs. Strickland's front path. "I'm going to find out what's going on," he said.

"If she is a spy, you might be sorry," I answered. Then I shook my head hard. I didn't actually believe Liam's **crackpot** idea, did I? Great, I thought, following him up the path. I hope he doesn't say anything rude.

Liam knocked, and then came the clack-clack of Mrs. Strickland unlocking the door from the inside. "Be polite," I hissed at my foster brother.

As soon as the door opened, Mrs. Strickland smiled at us. "Why, hello, boys," she said in a melodic voice. "Won't you come in?"

Liam grinned. "Thank you, ma'am," he said, and we stepped inside.

"What can I do for you today?" Mrs. Strickland's face and voice were both incredibly pleasant, but that just increased my stress level. I was terrified I'd have to pull Liam out of there and drag him home.

"Well, ma'am," Liam said. "We noticed you attended our football practice this afternoon. We just wanted to thank you for coming out to support the team."

"Oh, you're welcome, dear. I do love a good football game. I'll be coming to the game against Lanville Friday."

"That's wonderful to hear, ma'am," Liam replied.

I **gaped** at him. I had never heard so many "ma'ams" come out of his mouth in the whole six months he'd lived with us. He often forgot to use his manners, but apparently, he could also lay the politeness on way too thick. I wondered what he was up to.

Mrs. Strickland asked us to sit down and gave us some lemonade and cookies. Then she asked about school and how my dad was. Finally, she asked something shocking.



"Now, boys, tell me all about your plan for Friday night's game. How are you going to beat Lanville?"

My jaw dropped, but Liam's didn't. He didn't look surprised at all. Instead, he gave me a look, his eyebrows raised.

"We're not supposed to talk about it," I said quickly. "Coach wants it all kept quiet because if Lanville knew, they could prepare a defense. We want to surprise them."

"Well, life is full of surprises, isn't it?" Mrs. Strickland said.

"Yes, ma'am," Liam said. Then he got a strange look on his face. Suddenly, he stood up and bolted for the table near the front door. He snatched a notebook from it and began flipping pages maniacally.

I was so embarrassed.

Then Liam stopped. He stood perfectly still, staring at the page in front of him. On it was an absolutely beautiful sketch of a football team at practice. It wasn't notes or spy drawings; this was pure art.

"It's amazing," he whispered, admiring the detail.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Strickland. But why in the world would you grab my sketchbook?"

Now Liam looked embarrassed. "I—I thought you were a sp—spy," he stammered.

Mrs. Strickland cracked up. "You thought I was a spy? For who? Lanville?" She was laughing so hard I thought she was going to turn blue. "Darling, I'm just an artist. I love to draw action scenes like this one, and you kids sure are interesting to watch."

We sat down to look through her notebook. The images, beautifully drawn in pencil, perfectly captured the best moments from practice. Here was my friend Yousef, the quarterback, throwing a long pass. There was Jessie, our star running back, sprinting like a cheetah for the end zone.

Suddenly, Liam began to laugh. I joined him.

"Mrs. Strickland," Liam said, "I'm so sorry I thought you were a spy. These are amazing. Will you come to practice again on Monday?"

"I'd love to, dear," she answered.

Name:

Nonfiction: Structure of a Text – Q2:9

Date:

As you answer this week's questions, highlight your evidence in the text.

Battle of the Brass: Trumpets vs. Saxophones

Jazz bands, marching bands, and orchestras can set the mood with slow, even rhythms or rapidly changing, heart-pumping beats. When you hear a band play, you'll certainly get to hear all the instruments playing together as an ensemble. Occasionally, you'll hear an instrument featured in a solo. Everyone has their favorites, but two widely popular instruments are the saxophone and the trumpet.

Construction and Materials

If you were to ask someone to describe the differences between a saxophone and a trumpet, they'd probably start with the instruments' appearance. At first glance, the trumpet and the saxophone (often called "the sax"), look like they're made out of the same material. For the most part, they are. The bodies of both instruments are made of brass. The mouthpieces, however, are different. A trumpet mouthpiece can be made of brass, steel, silver, titanium, or plastic. A saxophone's mouthpiece is usually made of hard rubber, but it can be made of metal or wood. Saxophones require a **reed**, which is made of wood or plastic, but trumpets do not.

While both instruments contain brass, only the trumpet is considered part of the brass family of instruments. The sax is actually a woodwind instrument. This difference is due to the way the instruments produce sound. When a musician plays the saxophone, the reed vibrates against the mouthpiece, producing the sound waves that resonate through the instrument and exit as music. In a trumpet, the musician's lips create the vibration. The sound travels through a trumpet in much the same way it does in a saxophone; the difference is where the sound waves originate.

The mouthpiece accounts for another difference between the saxophone and the trumpet. A trumpet player must alter the **embouchure** — the way the player holds his or her lips—to create different notes. The player also uses his or her fingers to open and close the valves on the trumpet. It's combinations of embouchure and valve positions that make all the different notes a trumpet can produce. A saxophone, on the other hand, relies almost entirely on finger positions to produce different notes. Embouchure is still important, but the player does not drastically adjust the embouchure to affect the sounds that come from the instrument.

The saxophone and trumpet are the same color, are primarily made of the same material, and produce sound in much the same way. However, the origins of the sounds and the actual use of the instruments are quite different.



Saxophone

History

In looking and listening to these fascinating instruments, you might wonder how they came to be. The trumpet has been popular in one form or another for thousands of years. Historians believe early trumpet-like instruments were used in hunting and for military purposes over three thousand years ago. They were first used as musical instruments during the fifteenth century. As the trumpet developed over the years, musicians experimented with different sizes, shapes, and mechanics. The first trumpets had no keys and no valves with which to alter the pitch; musicians did that using only their mouths. The nineteenth century saw innovations in valve technology, which eventually led to the valves most trumpets use today.

The nineteenth century was important in the development of the saxophone, as well; that's when it was invented. The saxophone doesn't have the same ancient origins as the trumpet. It was first developed by Adolphe Sax in 1840. The original saxophone's fingering system (how the player moves his or her fingers to play specific notes) was based on the clarinet and the oboe. When Sax's patent expired in the 1860s, many musicians and instrument designers made alterations to the original model, eventually leading to the saxophone that we know today.

Varieties

There has never been just one form of a trumpet or only one form of a saxophone. There have always been many varieties of each. Modern saxophonists have several options including the alto sax, the tenor sax, and the soprano sax, among others. The alto sax is where most beginners start. Trumpets come in multiple varieties, as well. While the B-flat trumpet is the most common, there are other types. Students often begin learning on the cornet, a very similar instrument, before switching to the trumpet.

The different types of saxophones and trumpets vary in size, shape, sound, and range. A composer, conductor, or musician chooses the instrument that's most practical for the performance.

It's interesting to analyze the differences between saxophones and trumpets. While they're obviously two very different instruments, they have a lot in common. The next time you hear or see these amazing instruments, consider their appearance, their sound, their history, and the many varieties of each in use today. There's more to each of them than meets the eye (and ear).



Trumpet