Name _____ Date _____

Structure and Pacing with Flashback: Ten Minutes Late

Directions: This story is told in two sections. Read each section carefully before answering its questions, and notice how the author arranges time, events and the speed of the action.

Ten Minutes Late: Section 1

Read Section 1 of the story. Then answer the questions about how this part of the story is built.

The dashboard clock said 3:17 when the truck ahead of Ana stopped in the middle of the Fourth Street bridge and did not start again.

She was supposed to be at Hawthorne Elementary at 3:15, the way she had been every school day since her mother started working afternoons and picking up Luis became Ana's job. It was the one thing her mother had asked of her without a speech attached, and in a whole year Ana had not been late once.

At 3:19 the truck's hazard lights began to blink. Behind her, someone leaned on a horn, as if noise could push a stalled truck off a bridge. Ana called the school office and listened to it ring eleven times. Then she texted Luis, although he was nine and his phone lived at the bottom of his backpack under a layer of cracker crumbs: *Stay inside. I'm coming.*

At 3:21 the man in the next lane rolled down his window and caught her eye. "Relax," he called, grinning. "Ten minutes never hurt anybody."

Ana did not grin back. She knew exactly what ten minutes could do. Last October, she had promised herself that she would never find out again.

At 3:22 she counted the cars between her and the end of the bridge: fourteen. At 3:23 a tow truck appeared in her mirror, its yellow light turning slowly, as if it had all afternoon. At 3:24 she noticed that she was gripping the wheel so hard her knuckles had gone pale, and she made herself let go, one hand at a time.

Then the traffic moved.

It moved all at once. The stalled truck rolled onto the shoulder, brake lights went dark down the line, and Ana pulled forward, signaled, merged, and made it through the light at Hawthorne Avenue on the yellow. The school came into view: the flagpole, the empty bike rack, the pickup line already gone.

The dashboard clock said 3:25.

1. Section 1 of "Ten Minutes Late" opens as the truck ahead of Ana "stopped in the middle of the Fourth Street bridge and did not start again." Only in the following paragraph does the story explain her daily pickup responsibility. What is the effect of beginning with the problem instead of the background?

A. It gives readers a calm, slow introduction to Ana's family before any conflict begins.

B. It reveals immediately why being late frightens Ana so much.

C. Readers feel Ana's trouble right away, and the background that follows shows what she stands to lose.

D. It signals that the story will focus on the truck driver.

2. In Section 1, Ana calls the school office and listens to it ring "eleven times." She then texts Luis, whose phone "lived at the bottom of his backpack" under a layer of crumbs. How do these unsuccessful attempts to reach her brother affect the tension?

A. Each one cuts off a way to reach Luis, so the tension keeps building.

B. They show that Ana has given up on reaching him.

C. They prove that the school has already closed for the day.

D. They show that Luis is ignoring his sister on purpose.

3. In Section 1, while Ana waits on the bridge, sentence after sentence begins with a time, from "At 3:19" to "At 3:24" in steps of a minute or two. How do these repeated time markers affect the pace of the scene?

A. They show that the story takes place over several days.

B. They slow the scene so that readers feel each minute drag, just as Ana does.

C. They show that Ana has lost track of the time.

D. They speed the story up by skipping ahead several hours.

4. Which two sentences from Section 1 hint that something important happened in Ana's past without explaining what it actually was? Select two.

☐ A. "The school came into view: the flagpole, the empty bike rack, the pickup line already gone."

☐ B. "She knew exactly what ten minutes could do."

☐ C. "Last October, she had promised herself that she would never find out again."

☐ D. "At 3:23 a tow truck appeared in her mirror, its yellow light turning slowly, as if it had all afternoon."

☐ E. "Ana called the school office and listened to it ring eleven times."

5. Near the end of Section 1, the narrator writes, "Then the traffic moved." Immediately afterward, Ana "pulled forward, signaled, merged" on her way to the school. How does this sequence change the pace of the section?

A. The scene jumps back in time to an earlier afternoon.

B. The scene slows down even more as Ana waits for the tow truck.

C. After minutes of crawling, the scene suddenly races forward, matching Ana's rush to the school.

D. The scene pauses so that the narrator can describe the bridge in detail.

6. The final line of Section 1 is a paragraph containing a single sentence: "The dashboard clock said 3:25." What is the effect of ending the section at this particular moment?

A. It stops at a moment of uncertainty, exactly ten minutes late, so readers must read on to learn what Ana will find.

B. It resolves the conflict by showing that Ana arrived on time.

C. It suggests that the clock in Ana's car is broken.

D. It shows that Ana has decided to drive home instead.

Ten Minutes Late: Section 2

Read Section 2, which finishes the story. Some questions quote Section 1 so that you can compare the two parts.

Last October, she had been ten minutes late, too.

It was a Thursday, practice had run long, and afterward a boy named Marcus had stopped her by the gym doors to ask about the chemistry homework in a way that was not really about chemistry, and Ana had stood there smiling and talking while the minutes slid past without her noticing a single one. When she finally reached the school at 3:25, the pickup line was empty, the front doors were locked, and Luis was gone.

He had decided, at eight years old, that he could walk home by himself. He took a wrong turn at the car wash and kept going, and for two hours nobody knew where he was. A police officer finally found him at a gas station on Route 9, shivering in his thin windbreaker and eating a bag of chips that the cashier had given him. He was not hurt, and he did not even cry until he saw their mother's face.

Their mother did not yell, which was worse. She sat at the kitchen table that night with her hands folded and said only, "He's eight, Ana." After that night, Ana was never late again, not by a single minute, until today.

Now she was out of the car almost before she had turned off the engine. The front doors were shut. The bench by the flagpole was empty. Her heart did something it had not done since last October.

Then she saw him.

Luis was sitting on the low wall beside the office window, next to Mrs. Bell, the crossing guard, with a library book open on his knees and his backpack between his feet. He looked up, closed the book over one finger to keep his place, and checked the watch he had begged for on his birthday.

"Ten minutes," he said.

"I know. I'm sorry. A truck broke down on the bridge."

He shrugged and swung his backpack onto one shoulder, the way she always did. "It's okay. I didn't go anywhere." He said it simply, as if he were reporting the weather, and then he reached over and patted her arm twice, the way their mother did when someone needed calming down.

Ana laughed, and the laugh came out shaky, and she let her little brother walk her to the car.

7. Section 2 opens with the line "Last October, she had been ten minutes late, too." This flashback comes immediately after Ana reaches the empty pickup line at the end of Section 1. Why does the author place the flashback at this particular moment?

A. It shows that Ana arrived early and has time to remember.

B. It reveals that Ana has been dreaming the whole afternoon.

C. It gives readers a break because nothing important is happening in the present.

D. It holds off the answer about where Luis is, stretching the suspense at the moment readers most want to know.

8. In Section 1, a man in the next lane tells Ana, "Ten minutes never hurt anybody." She does not grin back. After reading the flashback in Section 2, how do readers understand her reaction differently?

A. She was rude to the stranger for no real reason.

B. Her fear no longer seems out of proportion, because ten minutes once meant two hours of not knowing where her brother was.

C. She secretly agreed that ten minutes does not matter.

D. She was angry at the stranger for blocking her lane.

9. In the flashback in Section 2, one long sentence follows Ana talking with Marcus by the gym doors "while the minutes slid past without her noticing a single one." How does the length of this sentence suit what happened that afternoon?

A. Its length shows that Ana was counting every minute carefully.

B. Its unbroken flow lets time slip by without a pause, just as the minutes slipped past Ana.

C. Its length makes the conversation with Marcus seem tense and frightening.

D. Its length shows that the flashback covers several years.

10. Back in the present in Section 2, Ana notices that "The front doors were shut" and "The bench by the flagpole was empty." Why are these ordinary details especially frightening at this point in the story?

A. They echo the locked doors and empty pickup line from last October, so it seems the past might be repeating.

B. They suggest that Ana has come to the wrong school.

C. They prove that Luis has already walked home.

D. They show that the school has been closed for repairs.

11. At the end of Section 2, Luis says, "It's okay. I didn't go anywhere." Then he pats Ana's arm "the way their mother did when someone needed calming down." What does this ending reveal about the two characters?

A. Luis is angry that his sister was late again.

B. Luis is planning to walk home alone next time.

C. Luis has forgotten everything about last October.

D. Luis knows what Ana feared, and now he is the one comforting her.

12. Across both sections, "Ten Minutes Late" moves from the present to last October and back again, and Ana reaches the school at 3:25 both times. What is the effect of organizing the story this way?

A. It shows that the same terrible event happens to Ana twice.

B. It places the two late arrivals side by side, inviting readers to compare them, so the calm ending feels like hard-won relief.

C. It suggests that Ana is only imagining the second afternoon.

D. It proves that Ana will never be late again.