Name _____ Date _____

An Unreliable Narrator: I Was Only Borrowing It

Directions: Read the story carefully. The narrator tells it his own way, so check every choice against what the details and the other characters actually show.

I Was Only Borrowing It

Let me be clear from the start: I did not steal my sister's camera. I borrowed it, which is a completely different thing, and anyone who says otherwise is ignoring the facts.

The camera was just sitting on June's shelf in the leather case she polished every Sunday, collecting dust like something in a museum. Grandpa had given it to her before he died, and as far as I could tell, she hardly ever touched it. I needed a real camera to photograph the Spring Showcase, and June was at a swim meet in Dayton until Sunday, so the timing was honestly perfect. I would have asked her, but she would have said no, and then I would have had to take it anyway, which would have been worse.

Before I left for school, I peeled the label with her name off the strap, just so nobody at the showcase would get confused about whose it was.

The showcase went better than I could have hoped. I photographed every act, and the art teacher asked where I had found such a beautiful old camera. I said it was a family camera, which was true. My friend Isaac was the only person who made things awkward. He took one look at the camera and asked, "Does June know you have that?" I told him it was a strange question, and it was.

The scratch on the lens was there before. I'm almost positive. Old things get scratched; that is simply what happens to antiques.

When June got home on Sunday, she went straight to her room, and a minute later she came back holding the empty case. Her face did something I had never seen it do.

"Wes," she said. "Where is it?"

I told her the truth, which was that it was in my backpack, perfectly safe, and that I had been planning to put it back that night. Mom looked at me over her glasses, the way she does when she already knows the answer to a question she hasn't asked yet.

June took the camera out of my backpack and turned it over in her hands as if it were a bird with an injured wing. She found the scratch in about two seconds. She didn't yell. She only said, very quietly, "Grandpa let me hold it for three years before he let me take a single picture." Then she went back to her room and closed the door so gently that I barely heard the latch.

So that is exactly what happened, from beginning to end. I borrowed a camera, I brought it back, and now everyone acts as if I committed a felony. Mom says I should apologize, and I told her I would, as soon as June admits that she hardly ever used it anyway.

That was four days ago, and June still hasn't said a word to me, which, if you ask me, proves that she's the one being unreasonable.

1. Which of these does the narrator of "I Was Only Borrowing It" state directly, instead of leaving it for readers to infer from other details?

A. Mom does not believe his version of events.

B. He caused the scratch on the camera's lens.

C. He peeled the label with June's name off the camera strap.

D. June no longer trusts him.

2. Which quotation best shows that the narrator understood, before he ever took the camera, that his sister would refuse to lend it to him?

A. "The camera was just sitting on June's shelf in the leather case she polished every Sunday, collecting dust like something in a museum."

B. "Before I left for school, I peeled the label with her name off the strap, just so nobody at the showcase would get confused about whose it was."

C. "I told her the truth, which was that it was in my backpack, perfectly safe, and that I had been planning to put it back that night."

D. "I would have asked her, but she would have said no, and then I would have had to take it anyway, which would have been worse."

3. The narrator claims the camera was "collecting dust" and that June "hardly ever touched it." Yet he also describes the camera as sitting in "the leather case she polished every Sunday" on her shelf. What does this detail suggest about the reliability of his claims?

A. The camera really was covered in thick dust when he borrowed it.

B. June is secretly planning to sell the camera.

C. June takes regular, careful care of the camera, so his picture of it as forgotten is unreliable.

D. June polishes the case only because Grandpa instructed her to.

4. The narrator says he peeled off June's name label "just so nobody at the showcase would get confused about whose it was." What does this detail reveal about his motives that the narrator himself does not admit?

A. He was worried that the label would be damaged at the showcase.

B. He did not want anyone at the showcase to know that the camera was June's.

C. He intended to replace the label with a more attractive one.

D. He wanted to make sure nobody mixed up his camera with someone else's.

5. At the showcase, Isaac takes one look at the camera and asks, "Does June know you have that?" What does his question suggest about how the situation looks to an outsider?

A. Isaac is concerned that June will miss her swimming competition.

B. Isaac wants to borrow the camera for himself.

C. Isaac thinks the narrator's photographs are better than June's.

D. Even a friend recognizes the camera as June's and doubts that the narrator had permission.

6. The narrator insists that the scratch on the lens "was there before." Then he adds, "I'm almost positive." How does the word "almost" affect what readers can reasonably conclude about the scratch?

A. It shows that June was the one who scratched it.

B. It shows that he is not truly sure, which gives readers reason to doubt his claim.

C. It proves that he scratched the lens himself.

D. It demonstrates that he has evidence the scratch already existed.

7. When the narrator explains where the camera is, Mom looks at him "over her glasses, the way she does when she already knows the answer to a question she hasn't asked yet." What does her reaction suggest about how she views his explanation?

A. She completely accepts that he did nothing wrong.

B. She is irritated with June for leaving the camera unprotected.

C. She suspects that his version of events leaves out the truth.

D. She is genuinely confused about where the camera is.

8. June says, very quietly, "Grandpa let me hold it for three years before he let me take a single picture." What gap does this line reveal between the way June and the narrator see the camera?

A. June is explaining that the camera is too old to take pictures.

B. To June, the camera is a trust she had to earn, while the narrator treated it as something to grab and use.

C. June thinks she takes better pictures than the narrator does.

D. June is bragging that Grandpa liked her more than the narrator.

9. Which two details from the scene after June discovers that the camera is missing show that she is deeply hurt, not just angry? Select two.

☐ A. "Then she went back to her room and closed the door so gently that I barely heard the latch."

☐ B. "Mom says I should apologize, and I told her I would, as soon as June admits that she hardly ever used it anyway."

☐ C. "She found the scratch in about two seconds."

☐ D. "When June got home on Sunday, she went straight to her room, and a minute later she came back holding the empty case."

☐ E. "June took the camera out of my backpack and turned it over in her hands as if it were a bird with an injured wing."

10. The story ends, "June still hasn't said a word to me, which, if you ask me, proves that she's the one being unreasonable." How does this final sentence affect the reader's opinion of the narrator's reliability?

A. It reveals that June has already forgiven him.

B. It convinces readers that June is being unreasonable.

C. His self-serving reasoning makes readers trust his judgment even less.

D. It shows that the narrator finally understands June's feelings.