Name _____ Date _____

Theme vs. Topic in a Short Scene: The Last Tryout

Directions: Read the scene. Then answer each question.

The Last Tryout

Twelve players sat on the bottom bleacher while Coach Bell flipped through her clipboard one last time. On Monday she had made the rule clear: there were ten spots on the basketball team, and not one more. Nina had counted the players twice, and the math came out the same both times. She and Grace were the last two guards fighting for the same spot.

Nina had practiced free throws in her driveway every night since June, even in the rain. She wanted that maroon jersey more than she had wanted anything all year.

The final drill was free throws, and Grace went to the line first. Her first shot bounced off the front of the rim, and her second shot missed everything. Her hands were shaking, and her eyes looked wet.

Nina was next in line, close enough to hear Grace breathing too fast. She could stay quiet, because one more miss would probably make the spot hers.

Instead, she stepped close and whispered, "Breathe out before you shoot, because it slows your hands down."

Grace blinked at her, took a long breath, and let it out slowly before she shot. The ball dropped through the net without touching the rim, and her next shot did the same.

When her own turn came, Nina made four of her five shots. Coach Bell wrote something on her clipboard and did not look up.

The list would go up on Friday, so nobody knew anything yet. As Nina pushed open the gym doors, Grace caught up and bumped her shoulder. "Thanks," Grace said quietly.

Nina still did not know if she had made the team, but she felt lighter than she had all week.

1. The topic of this scene is competition. A theme is the message a story shows about its topic. Which statement is a theme of the scene?

A. Nina and Grace compete for the last spot on the team.

B. Competition

C. In a competition, you should look out only for yourself.

D. Even in a competition, helping someone can matter more than winning.

2. Which two details from the scene show how much Nina wants to make the team? Select two.

☐ A. "Her hands were shaking, and her eyes looked wet."

☐ B. "Coach Bell wrote something on her clipboard and did not look up."

☐ C. "The list would go up on Friday, so nobody knew anything yet."

☐ D. "She wanted that maroon jersey more than she had wanted anything all year."

☐ E. "Nina had practiced free throws in her driveway every night since June, even in the rain."

3. Which words from the scene mark the moment Nina decides to help Grace?

A. "As Nina pushed open the gym doors"

B. "Nina had counted the players twice"

C. "Instead, she stepped close and whispered"

D. "Grace blinked at her"

4. Read this sentence: "She could stay quiet, because one more miss would probably make the spot hers." How does it help develop the theme?

A. It shows that Nina has already made the team.

B. It shows that helping Grace could cost Nina the spot she wants.

C. It shows that Grace is a better shooter than Nina.

D. It shows that Nina is too shy to talk to Grace.

5. Near the end, Grace catches up to Nina at the gym doors, bumps her shoulder and thanks her. How does this moment add to the theme?

A. It shows that Grace bumped into Nina by accident.

B. It shows that Nina's help really mattered to Grace.

C. It shows that Grace already knows who made the team.

D. It shows that Grace is upset that Nina made more shots.

6. The scene ends: "Nina still did not know if she had made the team, but she felt lighter than she had all week." How does this ending fit the scene as a whole?

A. It shows that Nina weighs less after a summer of practice.

B. It reveals that Nina made the team after all.

C. It shows that Nina is at peace with her choice, even without knowing the result.

D. It shows that Nina wishes she had stayed quiet.

7. An objective summary tells the main events without adding opinions. Which sentence is an objective summary of the whole scene?

A. Nina makes the kindest and smartest choice anyone could make at tryouts.

B. At the last tryout, Nina helps her rival Grace calm down and shoot well, then leaves without knowing if she made the team.

C. Grace misses her first two free throws at the line.

D. Nina helps Grace, so Coach Bell gives Nina the last spot on the team.

8. Each statement below is about the scene. Match each one to the kind of statement it is. Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ Basketball tryouts
2. _____ Helping a rival can matter more than coming out on top.
3. _____ Nina made four of her five shots.
4. _____ Grace should have practiced more over the summer.

A. Theme

B. Opinion

C. Detail from the scene

D. Topic