Name _____ Date _____

Two Tellings of One Event: The Accident

Directions: This story is told in two sections by two different narrators who were part of the same small accident. Read each section carefully before answering its questions, and notice what each narrator sees, leaves out or gets wrong.

The Accident: Section 1

Read Section 1, which is told by Lena, the new driver. Then answer the questions about her telling of the accident.

I had been driving for exactly sixteen days when the truck came out of nowhere.

My mother was still inside Corley's Market paying for the groceries, and I was backing out of our space so that I could pull up by the door and save her from carrying the bags across the lot. I went slowly, with both hands on the wheel, the way she had made me practice a hundred times in the church parking lot, and I checked the rearview mirror twice. The lane behind me was empty, and then it was not, and then came a crunch that I felt in my teeth.

The truck was enormous and dark red, and it had been going much too fast for a parking lot. I am sure of that, because it was suddenly there when a second before it had not been. My mother's car had a dent in the back bumper the size of a fist, while the truck had a scrape on its front fender that you could barely see.

The driver climbed down slowly, an old man in a canvas jacket, and he stood there glaring at me with his whole face squeezed up. I started apologizing before I had even unbuckled my seat belt, and I said I was sorry four times. I told him it was my mom's car, which was not something he needed to know, and that I had looked, I had really looked, which he did not seem to believe. The whole time, I kept looking at the store's glass doors, waiting for my mother to come out and tell me what to do.

He looked at the bumper, and then at me, and then at the phone in my hand, which was shaking so badly that I could not dial her number.

"Your first one?" he asked.

I nodded, because I knew he meant my first accident, and I was afraid he was about to tell me it would not be my last.

He wrote his name and number on the back of a receipt in big, careful letters and handed it to me: WALT. Then he said, "You'll look over your shoulder next time," and walked back to his truck, and I stood there holding the receipt, feeling as if a stranger had just sent me to the principal's office.

1. Section 1 of "The Accident" begins with Lena's sentence "I had been driving for exactly sixteen days when the truck came out of nowhere." What does this opening suggest about how Lena sees the accident?

A. She admits right away that her lack of experience caused the accident.

B. She shows that she has been in many accidents before.

C. She suggests that the truck was hiding from her on purpose.

D. From the first line, she presents the accident as something the truck did to her, not something she helped cause.

2. In Section 1, Lena says the truck "had been going much too fast for a parking lot" and then explains, "I am sure of that, because it was suddenly there when a second before it had not been." What does her reason suggest to a careful reader?

A. It proves that the truck was speeding, since Lena watched its speed for herself.

B. It shows that the truck's driver admitted to speeding.

C. Her certainty rests only on the fact that she did not see the truck coming, which could also mean that she missed it.

D. It shows that Lena's mother saw the accident from inside the store.

3. In Section 1, Lena starts "apologizing before I had even unbuckled my seat belt" and says she is sorry "four times" while also insisting to the driver that "I had looked, I had really looked" when he climbs down. What do these mixed reactions show about her?

A. She is trying to trick the driver into paying for the damage.

B. She has decided that the accident was entirely her fault.

C. She is calm and is only being polite to the older driver.

D. She is frightened enough to apologize again and again, yet she still insists that she was careful.

4. In Section 1, Lena says that the whole time she "kept looking at the store's glass doors, waiting for my mother to come out and tell me what to do." What does this detail show about her in this moment?

A. She is planning to run into the store to hide from the driver.

B. She wants her mother to see how well she handled the accident.

C. She feels young and unsure, and she wants a parent to take charge.

D. She is angry that her mother is taking so long to pay.

5. When the driver asks, "Your first one?" Lena says, "I knew he meant my first accident, and I was afraid he was about to tell me it would not be my last." What does her reaction show?

A. She does not understand what the driver is asking.

B. Her fear leads her to expect a warning in a simple question.

C. She is sure that she will have many more accidents.

D. She thinks the driver is asking about her first car.

6. Section 1 ends after the driver says, "You'll look over your shoulder next time," and walks away, leaving Lena "feeling as if a stranger had just sent me to the principal's office." How does Lena hear his words?

A. As praise for how calmly she handled the accident

B. As a threat to report her to the police

C. As a joke meant to make her laugh

D. As a scolding from someone in charge, telling her what she did wrong

The Accident: Section 2

Read Section 2, which is told by Walt, the other driver. Some questions quote Section 1 so that you can compare the two tellings.

I had left my reading glasses on the dashboard again, which is why I was squinting at the whole world that afternoon. I was also going faster than a man ought to go in a parking lot,

because I had spotted an empty space right by the door of Corley's Market, and my knees do not care for long walks.

The little gray car started backing out when I was maybe three car lengths away. I hit the horn and the brake at the same time, but it was not enough, and we met with a crunch that sounded a good deal worse than it was.

When I climbed down, the girl was still in the driver's seat, gripping her phone in both hands, and she was saying she was sorry before her door was even open, though she could not have been more than sixteen. She had looked in her mirror, she said, she had really looked, and I believed her, because I had watched her do it. She just had not turned her head, and I was coming at her from the side.

I did not tell her how fast I had been going. I am not proud of that.

Her bumper had a dent about the size of my fist, and my truck had a scratch you would need my glasses to find. She kept glancing over at the store as if she wanted to run inside and hide, and I could not blame her. Her hands were shaking too hard to dial.

"Your first one?" I asked her. I meant her first accident, because I remembered mine, in 1971, and how sure I had been that my life was over.

She nodded and looked as if she might cry.

I wrote my name and number on a receipt in large letters, since I cannot see small ones, and I tried to tell her the thing my father had told me that day, the only thing that had helped. "You'll look over your shoulder next time," I said. What I meant was that there would be a next time, that she would drive again and be fine, but it came out the way most things come out of me these days, short and gruff, and she looked at me as if I had sent her to the principal's office.

7. Section 2 begins with Walt explaining that he had left his reading glasses on the dashboard, "which is why I was squinting at the whole world that afternoon." In Section 1, Lena said he stood "glaring at me with his whole face squeezed up." What does Walt's detail suggest about Lena's description?

A. What Lena read as a glare may have been Walt squinting because he did not have his glasses.

B. It shows that Walt could not see the accident at all.

C. It shows that Lena made up the whole meeting with Walt.

D. It proves that Walt really was furious with Lena.

8. In Section 2, Walt admits that he was "going faster than a man ought to go in a parking lot," and later he says, "I did not tell her how fast I had been going. I am not proud of that." What do readers learn from this that Lena does not?

A. That Walt plans to report Lena to the police

B. That Walt thinks the accident was entirely Lena's fault

C. That Lena was completely wrong about the truck's speed

D. That Walt shares some of the blame, though he keeps it from Lena

9. Walt says that Lena "had looked in her mirror" and that he believed her "because I had watched her do it" and then he adds, "She just had not turned her head, and I was coming at her from the side." How does this passage bring the two tellings together?

A. It shows that Lena turned her head but still chose to back out.

B. It shows that Lena lied when she said she had looked.

C. It shows that Lena did look, as she said, but only in her mirror, while Walt was coming at her from the side.

D. It shows that Walt was not really there when the accident happened.

10. Walt says that Lena "kept glancing over at the store as if she wanted to run inside and hide" and that he could not blame her. In Section 1, Lena said she was "waiting for my mother to come out and tell me what to do." What does the difference show?

A. Lena was secretly planning to run away from the accident.

B. Lena's mother had already come out of the store.

C. Walt knew that Lena's mother was inside the store.

D. Walt misreads Lena's glances: she was watching for her mother, not looking for a place to hide.

11. Walt says he meant "You'll look over your shoulder next time" as "the thing my father had told me that day, the only thing that had helped" but admits that it "came out the way most things come out of me these days, short and gruff," and he sees that Lena takes it badly. What do readers learn from the difference between what he meant and what Lena heard?

A. Walt was repeating a rule from a driving test that he once failed.

B. Walt meant to comfort her with the promise that she would drive again, but his gruff way of speaking made his words sound like a scolding.

C. Walt wanted Lena to know that he would report the accident.

D. Walt meant to scold Lena, but she took his words as comfort.

12. The author tells the accident first through Lena in Section 1 and then through Walt in Section 2. What do readers gain from this order?

A. Readers first share Lena's fear and her view of Walt as harsh, so Walt's telling can reveal what she misread and what each of them left out.

B. Readers see that Walt is the only narrator who can be trusted.

C. Readers find out that the two tellings describe two different accidents.

D. Readers learn from Walt's section that Lena caused the accident by herself.