

Name _____ Date _____

READING

Directions: Read the following passage. Use information from the passage to answer the questions that follow.

Christie's Sacrifice

"Christie's Sacrifice" is a story narrated by Anna, a girl recovering from cancer. As a part of Anna's treatment, she has lost her hair. Read about how her best friend, Christie, supports Anna through the obstacles she faces.

From behind the chair, I watch Christie's face in the mirror, and I'm trying not to cry. Amazingly, Christie seems perfectly calm. "Are you sure about this?" I ask. "You can change your mind, and I'll totally understand. No matter what, I'm proud of you." But Christie shakes her head and says firmly, "I'm ready." I hold my breath and close my eyes while the blades turn toward her neck. And then it's all over.

Now you're probably wondering why I'm telling you such a scary story. Maybe I better give you a little background. First, you should know that Christie and I are not in a nightmare. We're just in a barbershop. Second, you should know that Christie is a very committed person. When she makes up her mind to do something, she never backs down, even after thinking about the consequences. And in my opinion, there are major consequences to chopping off all of your hair.

Third, I've been really sick the last few years. I'll spare you the details because you don't need to know all the awful things that cancer does to your body. But let's just say that being a kid with cancer is not fun. This time, though, I think I've beaten it for good. I feel like my old self again. Except for one small detail: my hair. After what I've been through, having no hair shouldn't seem like a hardship. But give me a break. It's kind of hard to ignore. I'm lucky to have some cool hats and a good wig, but I still feel different from everyone else.

Which brings me to the fourth and final piece of background information you need to understand this story. Christie has the most wonderful hair I have ever seen. Horses and supermodels might come close, but not quite. Unlike the rest of humankind, Christie has never had a bad hair day. So why are we in a barbershop? Why is her beautiful braid no longer hanging down her back but lying in a plastic bag? Because this haircut is Christie's way of showing me that I'm not alone. Her neck is bare and white, but her smile is huge as her eyes meet mine in the barbershop mirror. "Now we can grow our hair out together!" she says. Later, all that beautiful hair will be donated to help underprivileged children who suffer from hair loss but cannot afford to buy a wig. Right now, though, Christie and I don't feel like we've lost a thing.

READING (CONT.)

RL.2 (characters respond to challenges)

1. How does Christie respond to the narrator, Anna, having cancer? Be sure to use examples and evidence from the text.

2. How does the narrator, Anna, respond to Christie's plan?

- a. She is angry because Christie has beautiful hair.
- b. She is nervous for Christie but grateful to have such a good friend.
- c. She is glad that Christie decided not to cut her hair.
- d. She is excited and a little jealous that Christie is cutting her hair.

RL.3 Compare/contrast characters, settings, or events

3. Pick two characters, settings, or events from the text and explain how they are similar **and** different. Include specific details from the text. You may use a graphic organizer to organize your thinking.

READING

Directions: Read the following excerpt from Ken Mochizuki's book *Passage to Freedom*. Use information from the passage to answer the questions that follow.

**Passage to Freedom
by Ken Mochizuki**

"Passage to Freedom" is a story narrated by a young, Japanese boy living in Lithuania with his family during World War II. In this passage, the boy's father is asked to help Jewish people escape from Nazi soldiers to safety and freedom.

In 1940, my father was a diplomat, representing the country of Japan. Our family lived in a small town in the small country called Lithuania. There was my father and mother, my Auntie Setsuko, my younger brother Chiaki, and my three-month old baby brother, Haruki. My father worked in his office downstairs.

Then early one morning in late July, my life changed forever.

My mother and Auntie Setsuko woke Chiaki and me up, telling us to get dressed quickly. My father ran upstairs from his office.

"There are a lot of people outside," my mother said. "We don't know what is going to happen."

"What do they want?" I asked my mother.

"They have come to ask for your father's help," she replied. "Unless we help, they may be killed or taken away by some bad men."

Some of the children held on tightly to the hands of their fathers, some clung to their mothers. One little girl sat on the ground, crying.

I felt like crying, too. "Father," I said, "please help them."

My father stood quietly next to me, but I knew he saw the children. Then some of the men in the crowd began climbing over the fence. Borislav and Gudje, two young men who worked for my father, tried to keep the crowd calm.

My father walked outside. Peering through the curtains, I saw him standing on the steps. Borislav translated what my father said: He asked the crowd to choose five people to come inside and talk.

I couldn't help but stare out the window and watch the crowd, while downstairs, for two hours, my father listened to frightening stories. These people were refugees—people who ran away from their homes because if they stayed, they would be killed. They were Jews from Poland, escaping from the Nazi soldiers who had taken over their country.

The five men had heard my father could give them visas—official written permission to travel through another country. The hundreds of Jewish refugees outside hoped to travel east through the Soviet Union and end up in Japan. Once in Japan, they could go to another country. Was it true? the men asked. Could my father issue these visas? If he did not, the

Nazis would soon catch up with them.

My father answered that he could issue a few, but not hundreds. To do that, he would have to ask permission from his government in Japan.

Finally, the answer came from the Japanese government. It was “no.” My father could not issue that many visas to Japan. For the next two days, he thought about what to do.

“I cannot help these people yet,” he calmly told me. “But when the time comes, I will help them all that I can.”

The next morning, he brought the family together and asked what he should do. This was the first time he ever asked all of us to help him with anything.

My mother and Auntie Setsuko had already made up their minds. They said we have to think about the people outside before we thought about ourselves. And that is what my parents had always told me—that I must think as if I were in someone else’s place. If I were one of those children out there, what would I want someone to do for me?

I said to my father, “If we don’t help them, won’t they die?”

With the entire family in agreement, I could tell a huge weight was lifted off my father’s shoulders. His voice was firm as he told us, “I will start helping these people.”

RL.2 (determine theme; summarize text)

4. Which sentence best states the theme of *Passage to Freedom*?

- a. When deciding how to help others, it is important to think about yourself in their situation.
- b. If people are trying to escape, you should not help them if it puts you in danger.
- c. Many people needed help to get visas to leave the country.
- d. Sometimes people leave their family behind in order to help themselves and their situations.
- e. Families should always agree when making decisions on how to help others.

5. On your own paper, summarize the text *Passage to Freedom*.