



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 7

Answer Key

Finding Her Voice

Layla's hands felt like two blocks of ice as she waited backstage for her first debate tournament. She had joined the debate team on a whim, mostly to avoid another semester of study hall, and had never imagined actually standing behind a podium in front of judges. Her rival for the round, a confident eighth grader named Priya, had been arguing at these tournaments since sixth grade and moved through her opening statement like she had rehearsed it a hundred times, because she probably had.

When it was finally Layla's turn, her voice came out barely above a whisper. Her mind, which had felt so clear during practice the night before, suddenly went blank, like a chalkboard wiped clean before she could copy down the notes. She stumbled through her first point, glancing nervously at her coach, Mr. Osei, who gave her a small, steady nod from the back of the room. That nod was enough to remind her why she had shown up at all.

Layla took a breath, found her place in her notes, and kept going. She did not win the round, but by her closing statement, her voice had grown steady enough that even Priya glanced over with something like respect. Afterward, Mr. Osei told her that every confident debater he had ever coached had once sounded exactly like she did in that first round. Layla realized that finding her voice was not about sounding fearless from the very first sentence. It was about choosing to keep speaking even when her voice shook.

Circle the Correct Answer

1. Why did Layla originally join the debate team?

Answer: b) She wanted to avoid another semester of study hall

2. What happened to Layla's voice when her turn began?

Answer: b) It came out barely above a whisper

3. What helped Layla keep going during her round?

Answer: a) A steady nod from her coach, Mr. Osei

4. What did Layla come to understand about "finding her voice" by the end of the story?

Answer: c) It meant choosing to keep speaking even when nervous

True or False

5. Layla had competed in debate tournaments since sixth grade.

Answer: False

6. Layla won her very first debate round.

Answer: False

7. Mr. Osei told Layla that other confident debaters once sounded like she did.

Answer: True

Fill in the Blank

8. Layla's hands felt like two blocks of _____ as she waited backstage.

Answer: ice

9. By her closing statement, Layla's voice had grown _____ enough that Priya noticed.

Answer: steady

Think and Explain

10. The story says Layla's mind "went blank, like a chalkboard wiped clean." What does this comparison suggest about how Layla was feeling in that moment? Explain your answer.

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers noting that the simile suggests Layla suddenly felt completely unprepared or unable to recall anything she had practiced, capturing the suddenness and totality of her nervous forgetfulness.

11. What is the theme of this story? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers noting that real courage or confidence is not the absence of fear but the choice to keep going despite it, supported by details like Layla continuing to speak even though her voice shook.