



ELA GRADE 10

*SPRING BREAK LEARNING*

*MARCH 10-14*

*2025*

**The Office of  
Literacy**

*MEMPHIS-SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS OFFERS EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX, CREED, AGE, DISABILITY, NATIONAL ORIGIN, OR GENETIC INFORMATION.*



**Memphis-Shelby County Schools**  
**9-12 myPerspectives Reading Topics by Unit**



**Research is Clear**

- Students are able to build their vocabulary faster when they read multiple books, articles, and other texts on the same topic.
- When students are unfamiliar with a topic, it is harder for them to understand what they are reading and to learn new words.
- Reading several books, articles, and other texts on the same topic allows students to learn more and to learn faster.
- Students who read 20 minutes a day/5 days a week outside of classrooms are exposed to 1.8 million words in one school year and have an increase in critical thinking.

-NESCA, 2021

**How Parents Can Help**

- Below is a list of unit topics that are areas of focus throughout each grade levels' myPerspectives curriculum.
- By encouraging students to read about these topics at home, students have an opportunity to deepen their background knowledge. This will further support them in being prepared to learn in class!
- Students can use the same single sign on credentials used at school to access their myPerspectives online dashboard at home. Click [here](#) for more details regarding the student dashboard.

| Ninth Grade  | Eleventh Grade  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Unit 1-</b> American Voices: What does it mean to be “American”?</p> <p><b>Unit 2-</b>Survival: What does it take to survive?</p> <p><b>Unit 3-</b> The Literature of Civil Rights: How can words inspire change?</p> <p><b>Unit 4-</b> Star-Crossed Romances: Do we determine our own destinies?</p> <p><b>Unit 5-</b>Journeys of Transformation: What can we learn from a journey?</p> <p><b>Unit 6-</b>World’s End: Why do we try to imagine the future?</p>              | <p><b>Unit 1-</b> Writing Freedom: What is the meaning of freedom?</p> <p><b>Unit 2-</b> The individual and Society: What role does individualism play in American society?</p> <p><b>Unit 3-</b> Power, Protest, and Change: In what ways does the struggle for freedom change with history?</p> <p><b>Unit 4-</b> Grit and Grandeur: What is the relationship between literature and place?</p> <p><b>Unit 5-</b> Facing our Fears: How do we respond when challenged by fear?</p> <p><b>Unit 6-</b> Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Tales: What do stories reveal about the human condition?</p> |
| Tenth Grade  | Twelfth Grade   |
| <p><b>Unit 1-</b> Inside the Nightmare: What is the allure of fear?</p> <p><b>Unit 2-</b>Outsiders and Outcasts: Do people need to belong?</p> <p><b>Unit 3-</b>Extending Freedom’s Reach: What is the relationship between power and freedom?</p> <p><b>Unit 4-</b>All that Glitters: What do our possessions reveal about us?</p> <p><b>Unit 5-</b> Virtue and Vengeance: What motivates us to forgive?</p> <p><b>Unit 6-</b> Blindness and Sight: What does it mean to see?</p> | <p><b>Unit 1-</b> Forging A Hero: What makes a hero?</p> <p><b>Unit 2-</b> Reflecting on Society: How do people come to have different views of society?</p> <p><b>Unit 3-</b> Facing the Future Confronting the Past: How do our attitudes toward the past and future shape our actions?</p> <p><b>Unit 4-</b> Seeing Things New: Why are both vision and disillusion necessary?</p> <p><b>Unit 5-</b> Discovering the Self: How do we define ourselves?</p> <p><b>Unit 6-</b> Finding A Home: What does it mean to call a place home?</p>   |

*Note: The topics listed above align with texts that students will explore during the specified unit. In most cases, each grade level will engage with approximately 1 and a half units per quarter (i.e., Quarter1=Complete Unit 1 and begin Unit 2).*

**The Big 3 Reading Questions...Great Questions to Discuss After Reading!**

- What’s something you read today and what was the most interesting part about it?
- Did you learn any new or difficult words? What do they mean?
- What was the most important part about what you read?

# Literacy Support Parent Guide

## The Real Cost of Cheap Fashion

by Laura Anastasia 2017



*In this section of the Literacy Support Guide, we're reading the anchor text, "The Real Cost of Cheap Fashion" by Laura Anastasia. In "The Real Cost of Cheap Fashion," Laura Anastasia discusses the downsides of the "fast fashion" industry today.*

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

#### **Anchor Text**

1. Read the text.
2. Answer text dependent questions.
3. Complete Open Ended Written Responses.

#### **Paired Text**

1. Read the text.
2. Answer text dependent questions.
3. Complete Open Ended Written Responses.

#### **Ways to Support Your Child**

1. Ask your child about the informational texts: What was “The Real Cost of Cheap Fashion” and the paired text, “4 Years After Rana Plaza Tragedy, What’s Changed for Bangladeshi Garment Workers” about? What did you learn about Social Change & Revolution?
2. **Parent Answer Keys**-Review written responses together.

#### **Related Media**

1. Watch the following clips with your child at home:
  - [Undercover: The Refugees Who Make Our Clothes \(Panorama\)-BBC News](#)
  - [The life cycle of a t-shirt- Angel Chang](#)

# ANCHOR TEXT



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Real Cost of Cheap Fashion

By Laura Anastasia  
2017

*In this article, Laura Anastasia explores fast fashion and its undeniable dark side. As you read, take notes on the relationship between working conditions and profit.*

*Many of our trendy, inexpensive clothes are made in places like Bangladesh, where workers — including children — toil under conditions that may shock you.*

- [1] Young women hunch over sewing machines in a windowless workroom in Bangladesh. Elbow to elbow in the stifling<sup>1</sup> heat, they assemble jackets. Together, the women must sew hundreds of jackets an hour, more than 1,000 a day. Their daily wage is less than \$3.



*"A colorful line" by Duy Hoang is licensed under CC0.*

Just a week or two later, these same jackets will be labeled fall's hottest back-to-school item, selling to teens for \$14.99 each at malls across the United States.

The jackets are just one example of what is known as fast fashion: trendy clothes designed, created, and sold to consumers as quickly as possible at extremely low prices. New looks arrive in stores weekly or even daily, and they cost so little that many people can afford to fill their closets with new outfits multiple times each year — then toss them the minute they go out of style.

Chains such as H&M and Zara first popularized fast fashion in the early 2000s. It has since spread throughout the entire clothing industry. As a result, global clothing production has more than tripled since 2000. The industry now churns out more than 150 billion garments annually.

## **Long Hours & Little Pay**

- [5] Fast fashion items may not cost you much at the cash register, but they come with a serious price: Tens of millions of people in developing countries, some just children, work long hours in dangerous conditions to make them, in the kinds of factories often labeled sweatshops. Most garment<sup>2</sup> workers are paid barely enough to survive.

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1. **Stifling** (*adjective*) very hot to the point that it's difficult to breathe
  2. **Garment** (*noun*) an item of clothing such as a shirt or dress

Fast fashion also hurts the environment. Garments are manufactured using toxic chemicals and then transported around the globe, making the fashion industry the world's second-largest polluter, after the oil industry. And millions of tons of discarded clothing piles up in landfills each year.

"A lot of what we're throwing away hasn't even been worn that many times," says Elizabeth Cline, author of *Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion*. "Clothing has become a cheap form of entertainment."

Until the 1970s, most apparel worn by Americans was made in the United States. Then clothing production, like a lot of manufacturing, began moving overseas, where labor costs were lower. As recently as 1990, half the clothes sold in the U.S. were made in the U.S. Today, it's just 2 percent.

Most American clothing companies now manufacture their merchandise in developing countries<sup>3</sup> in Asia (see map, below). Workers there earn a fraction of what U.S. workers make — and have fewer protections. The lower labor costs translate to lower prices for shoppers (who then buy more clothing) and higher profits for retailers. That's helped make fashion a \$3 trillion global industry.

[10] Today, many of the world's 75 million garment workers live in China and Bangladesh, the top-two clothing producers. Workers often earn just a few dollars a day. Many are women in their teens.

"They're sometimes the first one in their families to have a real job, so the family is eager to get them into the factories as quickly as they can," says Michael Posner of New York University's Stern Center for Business and Human Rights. "It's a very tough existence."

Indeed, garment workers often toil in windowless rooms thick with fumes from the chemicals used to manufacture and dye clothes. If they dare miss a day because they're sick, they risk being fired.

For Taslima Aktar, that wasn't an option. The 23-year-old couldn't afford to lose her job at the Windy Apparels factory in Bangladesh, so when her manager refused last year to give her time off to see a doctor about a persistent fever she accepted it.

Weeks later, Aktar passed out at work. After she was revived, her boss sent her back to her sewing machine. Shortly after, her heart stopped and she died.

[15] "We know the same thing can happen any day, to any of us," says one of Aktar's co-workers, who told her story to *Slate*.

### ***A Deadly Accident***

Many people didn't give much thought to how their clothing was made until April 24, 2013, when the Rana Plaza factory building in Bangladesh collapsed. The deadliest accident in the history of the garment industry, it killed more than 1,100 workers and injured 2,500 others. The factory, overloaded with too many floors, workers, and

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3. Developing countries are those with low incomes and economies that rely heavily on agriculture.

equipment, had been making clothing for global brands such as Benetton, Joe Fresh, and Mango.

After the accident, many big brands pledged to improve garment factory conditions. About 200 major clothing companies partnered to create factory oversight programs in Bangladesh. In recent years, these programs have trained about 2 million workers in safety procedures. The companies have also hired independent engineers to inspect their factories.

In southern China, too, many factories now offer safer conditions and better wages than they did a decade ago. In some areas, the minimum wage for garment workers reached \$312 a month last year — 42 percent more than the previous year.

Better working conditions and wages come at a price, however. Some factories in Bangladesh have had to reduce their production capacity to afford higher employee pay and building repairs. That means the factories are less able to fill massive orders from big brands. As a result, big clothing companies may eventually shift their business to even poorer countries with fewer regulations,<sup>4</sup> experts say.

[20] Other factories can't afford to make the major structural upgrades<sup>5</sup> that are needed for them to be safe. (Of the 2,000 Bangladeshi factories that have been inspected so far, only 79 had passed final inspection as of March 2017.)

That's one reason unsafe working conditions persist. Last year, a garment factory fire in India killed 13 people. Another fire this past June injured more than 20 knitwear factory workers in Bangladesh. Some jumped out of third-story windows to escape the flames.

### ***Environmental Toll***

Fast fashion also takes a heavy toll on the environment. The industry consumes enormous amounts of water and other natural resources. Producing enough cotton for one pair of jeans takes about 1,800 gallons of water — the equivalent of about 105 showers.

Manufacturing polyester, which is made from petroleum, releases dangerous gases into the air. And farming cotton accounts for a quarter of all pesticides<sup>6</sup> used in the United States. (The U.S. sends about 70 percent of the cotton it grows overseas, where it's turned into clothing.) Some of those pesticides can cause asthma and other health problems, and the chemicals pollute fresh water.

The damage doesn't end once clothing is made. Americans on average trash more than 70 pounds of clothes and shoes a year. Most are burned or piled in landfills, where synthetic<sup>7</sup> fibers can take hundreds of years to break down.

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4. **Regulations** (*noun*) rules adopted for how a company or group will conduct business with its employees and customers
  5. This refers to improving the building's ability to handle heavy loads.
  6. **Pesticide** (*noun*) a chemical used to destroy insects and other organisms from eating or harming growing plants
  7. **Synthetic** (*adjective*) a substance or material made by a chemical process to imitate a natural product

- [25] "A lot of the problems in the fashion industry are things that are happening in other places: air and water pollution in China, poverty and low wages in Bangladesh," says Cline. "The waste is happening in our own backyard."

### ***Many big brands pledged to improve factory conditions***

As more people have become aware of the ugly side of fast fashion, the push for ethically<sup>8</sup> made clothing has grown. In the U.S., hundreds of start-ups are creating clothes out of recycled or organic fabrics. These companies use materials from U.S. factories, where they can better monitor working conditions. Big brands are trying to be more eco-conscious, as well. H&M, for example, offers customers store credit to recycle clothes at its retail locations.

"I think we're going to see big fashion brands become leaders in sustainable<sup>9</sup> clothes and make them accessible and more affordable," Cline predicts.

But experts agree it will take more than just efforts by clothing companies to remedy the problems of fast fashion. Local factory owners, global retailers, and consumers must all play a role.

If teenage shoppers, to whom much of fast fashion is marketed, educate themselves about how their clothes are made and think carefully about what they buy, it can make a real difference, experts say.

- [30] "It's everybody's problem," says Posner, "and it's everybody's responsibility to come together and solve it."

*From "The Real Cost of Cheap Fashion" by Laura Anastasia. Published in THE NEW YORK TIMES UPFRONT, September 4, 2017. Copyright © 2017 Scholastic Inc. Reproduced by permission.*

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8. **Ethically** (*adverb*) in accordance with moral rules; in a way that avoids doing harm
9. **Sustainable** (*adjective*) causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time



5. What connection does the author draw between working conditions and profits?

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which statement best describes the main idea of the text?
  - A. Durable and affordable clothing cannot be produced without the fast fashion industry.
  - B. There are serious human and environmental costs to purchasing trendy and cheap clothing.
  - C. Teenagers need to weigh the costs and benefits of fast fashion before deciding to work for retailers.
  - D. American companies ensure that their clothing is produced in environmentally friendly and ethical ways.
  
2. Which quotation from the passage demonstrates the connection between garment workers and consumers?
  - A. "Fast fashion items may not cost you much at the cash register, but they come with a serious price: Tens of millions of people... work long hours in dangerous conditions to make them" (Paragraph 5)
  - B. "Until the 1970s, most apparel worn by Americans was made in the United States. Then clothing production, like a lot of manufacturing, began moving overseas, where labor costs were lower." (Paragraph 8)
  - C. "'They're sometimes the first one in their families to have a real job, so the family is eager to get them into the factories as quickly as they can,' says Michael Posner" (Paragraph 11)
  - D. "Fast fashion also takes a heavy toll on the environment. The industry consumes enormous amounts of water and other natural resources." (Paragraph 22)
  
3. How does the author develop the central idea over the course of the passage?
  - A. by sharing the personal narratives of garment workers
  - B. by listing the many negative effects of cheap fashion production
  - C. by describing laws enacted to protect garment workers in fast fashion
  - D. by describing popular fashion trends in America over the last few decades
  
4. What is the author's main purpose in the passage?
  - A. to convince readers that companies should provide corporate housing to factory employees
  - B. to convince readers that companies should provide cheaper fashion selections to consumers
  - C. to encourage readers to only buy from companies with expensive and ethically made clothing
  - D. to encourage readers to think more carefully about what they buy and where it comes from



# PAIRED TEXT



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# 4 Years After Rana Plaza Tragedy, What's Changed For Bangladeshi Garment Workers

By Ashley Westerman  
2017

*In 2013, a tragedy in Bangladesh led to attention from many labor and human rights organizations and caused a call for change in the garment industry, mainly a need for transparency, or being open and honest about business operations. In this informational text, the Rana Plaza factory collapse and its effects are discussed. As you read, make note of the details that support why transparency is needed to prevent issues like the ones at Rana Plaza.*

- [1] On April 24, 2013, the eight-story Rana Plaza building outside Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed, killing more than 1,100 people and injuring thousands of others. At the time, the building housed five garment factories that manufactured goods for major retail companies in Europe and North America.



*"Photo of Rana Plaza taken one year before the collapse" by Sean Robertson is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0.*

It is considered the deadliest disaster in the garment industry. The causes included shoddy<sup>1</sup> construction, a building with too many floors and too much heavy equipment for the structure to withstand.

The incident shook Bangladesh's \$28 billion garment industry, the second largest in the world behind China. It drew attention to horrific conditions for factory employees, and raised questions about transparency in the global garment industry in which they work.

But four years later, a report on supply chain transparency released by Human Rights Watch<sup>2</sup> finds only 17 of 72 apparel and footwear companies contacted by a coalition<sup>3</sup> of labor and human rights groups and global unions have agreed to implement a transparency pledge by the end of this year.

- [5] The Apparel and Footwear Supply Chain Transparency Pledge sets a minimum industry-wide standard for supply chain disclosure,<sup>4</sup> says Aruna Kashyap, senior counsel in the Women's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch and co-author of the report. The pledge was drafted and endorsed last year by a nine-member coalition,

1. **Shoddy** (*adjective*) badly made
2. an international non-governmental organization, headquartered in New York City, that conducts research and advocacy on human rights
3. an alliance for action
4. a release of information that could impact a worker's decisions

which includes Human Rights Watch, the International Labor Rights Forum<sup>5</sup> and International Trade Union Confederation,<sup>6</sup> and requires companies to disclose twice a year all the sites that manufacture their products, including details such as addresses, types of products made and number of workers at each site.

## Limited progress

In the aftermath of the Rana Plaza tragedy, the Bangladeshi government rushed to improve safety measures, and human rights and labor advocates called for greater accountability and transparency in the industry. Last year, 38 people were charged with murder in the building collapse.

Government labor reforms regarding workers' rights and pay and factory compliance<sup>7</sup> have been put in place. But "in terms of effectiveness, there remains a gap," Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director with the Centre for Policy Dialogue in Dhaka, recently told The Daily Star, a Dhaka-based newspaper.

Two major agreements between global retailers and brands and trade unions — the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety — were also signed after the tragedy. The organizations in charge of these initiatives released statements this month indicating they had made progress, but there was still more work to be done.

Kashyap says that even though global apparel companies don't directly employ workers in Bangladesh, they do own and sell brands that have business relationships with the factories that employ those workers. And it's transparency about those relationships — knowing which factories are producing for which brands being sold by which parent company<sup>8</sup> — that is important, she says.

[10] Companies such as Nike, Patagonia and H&M Group are among the 17 committing to adhere to the transparency pledge by the end of 2017. Others, such as Columbia Sportswear and the Walt Disney Co., which publish names and addresses of supplier factories, are acknowledged in the report as moving "in the right direction." Companies listed in the "No Commitment to Publish Supplier Factory Information" category include Hugo Boss, Mango and Walmart.

"The labor movement, over decades, has been demanding that parent companies have to publish their supplier information," says Kashyap. While many international retailers have been reporting that information in some capacity over the years, she says, it's been inconsistent.

Kashyap says the Rana Plaza tragedy was a wake-up call because no one knew immediately which companies were sourcing clothing from the building at the time of its collapse.

"And so [investigators] had to actually go through the ruins to collect labels or interview surviving workers ... to hold these brands accountable," says Kashyap.

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5. a nonprofit advocacy organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., U.S., that describes itself as "an advocate for and with the working poor around the world."
  6. world's largest trade union organization
  7. **Compliance** (*noun*) the act of meeting rules or guidelines
  8. companies that own and/or control other companies

In the end, major apparel companies from the U.S. and Europe, including Children's Place, Mango and Premier Clothing, were found to have had recent orders in factories at Rana Plaza.

## 'It does matter to consumers'

- [15] After Rana Plaza, which came on the heels of two other deadly factory fires — one in Pakistan and the other also in Bangladesh — Kashyap says no parent company in the garment industry should still be resisting transparency, but many are.

There are many reasons a company might not want to sign the transparency pledge, Kashyap says, including fears of competitive disadvantage and anti-competition concerns.

Some companies, such as Walmart, won't sign the transparency pledge because they already have their own transparency mechanisms in place. "Walmart is working to improve transparency around our supply chain through a number of initiatives," Marilee McInnis, a spokeswoman for Walmart, told NPR via email.

But Kashyap says even when companies implement their own measures, it may not be enough. "We're not saying that those systems should not be in place," says Kashyap. "What we're saying is that there are clear limitations to those systems and what transparency does complements everything else you have."

Another reason that so few companies have signed the pledge so far could be because, historically, factory lists have been viewed as proprietary information,<sup>9</sup> says Sharon Waxman, president of the Fair Labor Association, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that brings together brand suppliers and labor rights groups with the goal of improving workers' rights.

- [20] But agreements like the transparency pledge are still very important and they matter to consumers, says Waxman. She notes that many of the companies that have signed the pledge are members of her organization.

"I think consumers, if they have a choice to buy from a brand or supplier that has a very high level of labor standard compared to another one, the price being the same — I think it does matter to consumers," she says. "And if you step back and look at the spread of laws and regulations that are demanding and requiring more transparency in supply chains. I think that really speaks to the level of interest of consumers."

While the transparency pledge has no real enforcement mechanism, Waxman says once a company is on the record saying it's going to disclose more information about its supply chain, this will lead to greater accountability.

## 'They didn't know who to reach out to'

More transparency would also send a strong message to workers in the industry, says Kashyap of Human Rights Watch.

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9. also known as a trade secret, is information a company wishes to keep confidential

Bangladesh's garment industry is huge: According to the Clean Clothes Campaign, an alliance of non-governmental organizations and trade unions in the garment industry, it employs between 3.5 million to 4 million people and accounts for about 12 percent of Bangladesh's GDP.

- [25] Since the Rana Plaza collapse, Bangladeshis have become increasingly vocal in demanding better wages and working conditions. The country's minimum wage is just 32 cents an hour.

When tens of thousands of workers walked off the job to protest low wages at the end of last year, it resulted in a week-long shutdown of more than 50 factories outside Dhaka.

But after Rana Plaza, some refused to go back to work in the industry. Kashyap has been in touch with some of them, and wrote this month about one Rana Plaza survivor's ongoing struggle with depression and trauma.

"One of the things that she said was that she didn't know — a lot of workers didn't know — who they were producing for," Kashyap says. After the collapse, "They didn't know who to reach out to."

*©2017 National Public Radio, Inc. News report titled "4 Years After Rana Plaza Tragedy, What's Changed for Bangladeshi Garment Workers?" by Ashley Westerman was originally published on npr.org on April 30, 2017, and is used with the permission of NPR. Any unauthorized duplication is strictly prohibited.*

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What is the central idea of the passage?
  - A. The garment industry has been protesting unsafe working conditions for years but only recently have seen any change.
  - B. The garment industry has always been a dangerous place for workers and recent tragedies are reminders that change is needed.
  - C. Regulation of the garment industry to ensure worker protections are in place is a complex issue, even in the shadow of a public tragedy.
  - D. Regulation of the garment industry is easily implemented when parent companies commit to safety standards, especially after a tragedy.
  
2. What does the word "complements" mean as it is used in paragraph 18?
  - A. accompanies
  - B. enhances
  - C. partners
  - D. flatters
  
3. Which of the following quotes provides the best evidence to support the author's idea that transparency in the garment industry has been inconsistent (Paragraph 11)?
  - A. "In the aftermath of the Rana Plaza tragedy, the Bangladeshi government rushed to improve safety measures, and human rights and labor advocates called for greater accountability and transparency in the industry." (Paragraph 6)
  - B. "Kashyap says that even though global apparel companies don't directly employ workers in Bangladesh, they do own and sell brands that have business relationships with the factories that employ those workers." (Paragraph 9)
  - C. "Columbia Sportswear and the Walt Disney Co., which publish names and addresses of supplier factories, are acknowledged in the report as moving "in the right direction." Companies listed in the "No Commitment to Publish Supplier Factory Information" category include Hugo Boss, Mango and Walmart." (Paragraph 10)
  - D. "In the end, major apparel companies from the U.S. and Europe, including Children's Place, Mango and Premier Clothing, were found to have had recent orders in factories at Rana Plaza." (Paragraph 14)
  
4. What is the author's main purpose in the text?
  - A. to explain the progress made toward transparency in the garment industry and illustrate the need for continued change.
  - B. to retell the events of the Rana Plaza tragedy and demonstrate how new safety measures in the garment industry will prevent similar future tragedies.
  - C. to question the lack of progress made by the labor movement in the garment industry to move toward a full overall of the industry in order to promote change.
  - D. to criticize the lack of progress that some retail and parent companies have made in moving toward transparency and highlighting how this will inevitably lead to future tragedies.

5. How does paragraph 28 contribute to the development of ideas in the text? Use evidence from throughout the text to support your answer.

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# ANSWER KEYS



# Answer Key > The Real Cost of Cheap Fashion

by Laura Anastasia 2017

1. Which statement best describes the main idea of the text?

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development; provide an objective or critical summary. **9-10.RI.KID.2**

- A. Durable and affordable clothing cannot be produced without the fast fashion industry.
- B. There are serious human and environmental costs to purchasing trendy and cheap clothing.**
- C. Teenagers need to weigh the costs and benefits of fast fashion before deciding to work for retailers.
- D. American companies ensure that their clothing is produced in environmentally friendly and ethical ways.

2. Which quotation from the passage demonstrates the connection between garment workers and consumers?

Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw inferences; cite the strongest, most compelling textual evidence to support conclusions. **9-10.RI.KID.1**

- A. "Fast fashion items may not cost you much at the cash register, but they come with a serious price: Tens of millions of people... work long hours in dangerous conditions to make them" (Paragraph 5)**
- B. "Until the 1970s, most apparel worn by Americans was made in the United States. Then clothing production, like a lot of manufacturing, began moving overseas, where labor costs were lower." (Paragraph 8)
- C. "'They're sometimes the first one in their families to have a real job, so the family is eager to get them into the factories as quickly as they can,' says Michael Posner" (Paragraph 11)
- D. "Fast fashion also takes a heavy toll on the environment. The industry consumes enormous amounts of water and other natural resources." (Paragraph 22)

3. How does the author develop the central idea over the course of the passage?

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development; provide an objective or critical summary. **9-10.RI.KID.2**

- A. by sharing the personal narratives of garment workers
- B. by listing the many negative effects of cheap fashion production**
- C. by describing laws enacted to protect garment workers in fast fashion
- D. by describing popular fashion trends in America over the last few decades

4. What is the author's main purpose in the passage?

Determine an author's point of view or purpose and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose. **9-10.RI.CS.6**

- A. to convince readers that companies should provide corporate housing to factory employees
- B. to convince readers that companies should provide cheaper fashion selections to consumers
- C. to encourage readers to only buy from companies with expensive and ethically made clothing
- D. to encourage readers to think more carefully about what they buy and where it comes from**

5. What connection does the author draw between working conditions and profits?

Analyze how an author presents and develops key ideas and events to impact meaning. **9-10.RI.KID.3**

**Answers will vary. The author implies that fashion companies are willing to allow dangerous working conditions to persist for garment workers in order to maximize profits. The author states that "most American clothing companies now manufacture their merchandise in developing countries" because "workers there earn a fraction of what U.S. workers make – and have fewer protections" (Paragraph 9). Even though women "must sew hundreds of jackets an hour, more than 1,000 a day," they still only make "less than \$3" a day (Paragraph 1). The workers make less than one jacket's retail price in a week. This highlights how profits are more important than the safety or welfare of the workers. The working conditions for "tens of millions of people in developing countries, some just children" include "sewing machines in a windowless workroom" as well as working "long hours**

in... sweatshops" (Paragraph 1, Paragraph 5). Even though the author acknowledges that some companies are trying to improve factory conditions and advocate for workers, most companies are still maintaining profits at the expense of garment workers.

# Answer Key > 4 Years After Rana Plaza Tragedy, What's Changed

## For Bangladeshi Garment Workers

by Ashley Westerman2017

1. What is the central idea of the passage?

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development; provide an objective or critical summary. **9-10.RI.KID.2**

- A. The garment industry has been protesting unsafe working conditions for years but only recently have seen any change.
- B. The garment industry has always been a dangerous place for workers and recent tragedies are reminders that change is needed.
- C. Regulation of the garment industry to ensure worker protections are in place is a complex issue, even in the shadow of a public tragedy.**
- D. Regulation of the garment industry is easily implemented when parent companies commit to safety standards, especially after a tragedy.

2. What does the word "complements" mean as it is used in paragraph 18?

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. **9-10.RI.CS.4**

- A. accompanies
- B. enhances**
- C. partners
- D. flatters

3. Which of the following quotes provides the best evidence to support the author's idea that transparency in the garment industry has been inconsistent (Paragraph 11)?

Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw inferences; cite the strongest, most compelling textual evidence to support conclusions. **9-10.RI.KID.1**

Analyze how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text. **9-10.RI.CS.5**



- A. "In the aftermath of the Rana Plaza tragedy, the Bangladeshi government rushed to improve safety measures, and human rights and labor advocates called for greater accountability and transparency in the industry." (Paragraph 6)
- B. "Kashyap says that even though global apparel companies don't directly employ workers in Bangladesh, they do own and sell brands that have business relationships with the factories that employ those workers." (Paragraph 9)
- C. **"Columbia Sportswear and the Walt Disney Co., which publish names and addresses of supplier factories, are acknowledged in the report as moving "in the right direction." Companies listed in the "No Commitment to Publish Supplier Factory Information" category include Hugo Boss, Mango and Walmart." (Paragraph 10)**
- D. "In the end, major apparel companies from the U.S. and Europe, including Children's Place, Mango and Premier Clothing, were found to have had recent orders in factories at Rana Plaza." (Paragraph 14)

4. What is the author's main purpose in the text?

Determine an author's point of view or purpose and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose. **9-10.RI.CS.6**

- A. **to explain the progress made toward transparency in the garment industry and illustrate the need for continued change.**
- B. to retell the events of the Rana Plaza tragedy and demonstrate how new safety measures in the garment industry will prevent similar future tragedies.
- C. to question the lack of progress made by the labor movement in the garment industry to move toward a full overall of the industry in order to promote change.
- D. to criticize the lack of progress that some retail and parent companies have made in moving toward transparency and highlighting how this will inevitably lead to future tragedies.

5. How does paragraph 28 contribute to the development of ideas in the text? Use evidence from throughout the text to support your answer.

Analyze how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text. **9-10.RI.CS.5**

Answers may vary; students should explain that the author highlights the need for transparency in the garment industry throughout the text and in paragraph 28 demonstrates that the victims of Rana Plaza were not sure who they were even working for to reach out before the tragedy. In paragraph 28, the author concludes the article by sharing the experience of a victim, "One of the things that she said was that she didn't know — a lot of workers didn't know — who they were producing for,' Kashyap says. After the collapse, 'They didn't know who to reach out to.'" This reiterates what the author explains happened during the investigation of the tragedy, "no one knew immediately which companies were sourcing clothing from the building at the time of its collapse. 'And so [investigators] had to actually go through the ruins to collect labels or interview surviving workers ... to hold these brands accountable,'" (Paragraph 12-13). The author explains that, even though labor unions have demanded parent companies to publish supplier information, the results have been inconsistent (Paragraph 11) and the lack of transparency leads to tragedies like Rana Plaza. Even companies who have their own safety protocols in place, "transparency [just] complements everything else you have" (Paragraph 18).

ELA Grade 10



# WINTER STUDENT/PARENT PACKET

Week Two



**DECEMBER 23, 2024 -  
JANUARY 3, 2025**



**CREATED BY THE OFFICE OF LITERACY**

# Literacy Support Parent Guide

## The First Day

by Edward P. Jones 1992



*In this section of the Literacy Support Guide, we're reading the anchor text, "The First Day" by Edward P. Jones. In "The First Day," a young Black girl attends her first day of school.*

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#### **Anchor Text**

1. Read the text.
2. Answer text dependent questions.
3. Complete Open Ended Written Responses.

#### **Paired Text**

1. Read the text.
2. Answer text dependent questions.
3. Complete Open Ended Written Responses.

#### **Ways to Support Your Child**

1. Ask your child about the informational texts: What was “The First Day” and the paired text, “Safety of Numbers” about? What did you learn about Friendship & Family?
2. **Parent Answer Keys**-Review written responses together.

#### **Related Media**

1. Watch the following clips with your child at home:
  - ['Novelist, Short Story Writer Edward P. Jones in 2005'](#)
  - ['The Scurlocks and Black Washington'](#)
  - ['Edward Jones, The First Day'](#)

# ANCHOR TEXT



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The First Day

By Edward P. Jones

1992

*Edward Paul Jones (October 5, 1950) is an American novelist and short story writer. He won the Pulitzer Prize for his 2003 novel *The Known World*. This short story is from his 1992 book of short stories, *Lost in the City*.*

***As you read, take notes on how the phrase "This is my mother" is used to add meaning to the story.***

[1] On an otherwise unremarkable September morning, long before I learned to be ashamed of my mother, she takes my hand and we set off down New Jersey Avenue to begin my very first day of school. I am wearing a checkeredlike blue-and-green cotton dress, and scattered about these colors are bits of yellow and white and brown. My mother has uncharacteristically spent nearly an hour on my hair that morning, plaiting<sup>1</sup> and replaiting so that now my scalp tingles. Whenever I turn my head quickly, my nose fills with the faint smell of Dixie Peach hair grease. The smell is somehow a soothing one now and I will reach for it time and time again before the morning ends. All the plaits, each with a blue barrette near the tip and each twisted into an uncommon sturdiness, will last until I go to bed that night, something that has never happened before. My stomach is full of milk and oatmeal sweetened with brown sugar. Like everything else I have on, my pale green slip and underwear are new, the underwear having come three to a plastic package with a little girl on the front who appears to be dancing. Behind my ears, my mother, to stop my whining has dabbed the stingiest bit of her gardenia perfume, the last present my father gave her before he disappeared into memory. Because I cannot smell it, I have only her word that the perfume is there. I am also wearing yellow socks trimmed with thin lines of black and white around the tops. My shoes are my greatest joy, black patent-leather miracles, and when one is nicked at the toe later that morning in class, my heart will break.



*"Untitled" by Debby Hudson is licensed under CC0.*

I am carrying a pencil, a pencil sharpener, and a small ten-cent tablet with a black-and-white speckled cover. My mother does not believe that a girl in kindergarten needs such things, so I am taking them only because of my insistent whining and because they are presents from our neighbors, Mary Keith and Blondelle Harris. Miss Mary and Miss Blondelle are watching my two younger sisters until my mother returns. The women are as precious to me as my mother and sisters. Out playing one day, I have overheard an older child, speaking to another child, call Miss Mary and Miss Blondelle a word that is brand new to me. This is my mother: When I say the word in fun to one of my sisters, my mother slaps me across the mouth and the word is lost for years and years.

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1. to braid

All the way down New Jersey Avenue, the sidewalks are teeming with children. In my neighborhood, I have many friends, but I see none of them as my mother and I walk. We cross New York Avenue, we cross Pierce Street, and we cross L and K, and still I see no one who knows my name. At I Street, between New Jersey Avenue and Third Street, we enter Seaton Elementary School, a timeworn, sad-faced building across the street from my mother's church, Mt. Carmel Baptist.

Just inside the front door, women out of the advertisements in *Ebony*<sup>2</sup> are greeting other parents and children. The woman who greets us has pearls thick as jumbo marbles that come down almost to her navel, and she acts as if she had known me all my life, touching my shoulder, cupping her hand under my chin. She is enveloped in a perfume that I only know is not gardenia. When, in answer to her question, my mother tells her that we live at 1227 New Jersey Avenue, the woman first seems to be picturing in her head where we live. Then she shakes her head and says that we are at the wrong school, that we should be at Walker-Jones.

- [5] My mother shakes her head vigorously. "I want her to go here," my mother says. "If I'da wanted her someplace else, I'da took her there." The woman continues to act as if she has known me all my life, but she tells my mother that we live beyond the area that Seaton serves. My mother is not convinced and for several more minutes she questions the woman about why I cannot attend Seaton. For as many Sundays as I can remember, perhaps even Sundays when I was in her womb, my mother has pointed across I Street to Seaton as we come and go to Mt. Carmel. "You gonna go there and learn about the whole world." But one of the guardians of that place is saying no, and no again. I am learning this about my mother: The higher up on the scale of respectability a person is — and teachers are rather high up in her eyes — the less she is liable to let them push her around. But finally, I see in her eyes the closing gate, and she takes my hand and we leave the building. On the steps, she stops as people move past us on either side.

"Mama, I can't go to school?"

She says nothing at first, then takes my hand again and we are down the steps quickly and nearing New Jersey Avenue before I can blink. This is my mother: She says, "One monkey don't stop no show."

Walker-Jones is a larger, newer school and I immediately like it because of that. But it is not across the street from my mother's church, her rock, one of her connections to God, and I sense her doubts as she absently rubs her thumb over the back of her hand. We find our way to the crowded auditorium where gray metal chairs are set up in the middle of the room. Along the wall to the left are tables and other chairs. Every chair seems occupied by a child or adult. Somewhere in the room a child is crying, a cry that rises above the buzz-talk of so many people. Strewn about the floor are dozens and dozens of pieces of white paper, and people are walking over them without any thought of picking them up. And seeing this lack of concern, I am all of a sudden afraid.

"Is this where they register for school?" my mother asks a woman at one of the tables.

- [10] The woman looks up slowly as if she has heard this question once too often. She nods. She is tiny, almost as small as the girl standing beside her. The woman's hair is set in a mass of curlers and all of those curlers are made of paper money, here a dollar bill, there a five-dollar bill. The girl's hair is arrayed in curls, but some of them are beginning to droop and this makes me happy. On the table beside the woman's pocketbook is a large

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2. a magazine that covers African American news and culture

notebook, worthy of someone in high school, and looking at me looking at the notebook, the girl places her hand possessively on it. In her other hand she holds several pencils with thick crowns of additional erasers.

"These the forms you gotta use?" my mother asks the woman, picking up a few pieces of the paper from the table. "Is this what you have to fill out?"

The woman tells her yes, but that she need fill out only one.

"I see," my mother says, looking about the room. Then: "Would you help me with this form? That is, if you don't mind."

The woman asks my mother what she means.

[15] "This form. Would you mind helpin me fill it out?"

The woman still seems not to understand.

"I can't read it. I don't know how to read or write, and I'm askin you to help me." My mother looks at me, then looks away. I know almost all of her looks but this one is brand new to me. "Would you help me, then?"

The woman says Why sure, and suddenly appears happier, so much more satisfied with everything. She finishes the form for her daughter and my mother and I step aside to wait for her. We find two chairs nearby and sit. My mother is now diseased, according to the girl's eyes, and until the moment her mother takes her and the form to the front of the auditorium, the girl never stops looking at my mother. I stare back at her. "Don't stare," my mother says to me. "You know better than that."

Another woman out of the *Ebony* ads takes the woman's child away. Now, the woman says upon returning, let's see what we can do for you two.

[20] My mother answers the questions the woman reads off the form. They start with my last name, and then on to the first and middle names. This is school, I think. This is going to school. My mother slowly enunciates each word of my name. This is my mother: As the questions go on, she takes from her pocketbook document after document, as if they will support my right to attend school, as if she has been saving them up for just this moment. Indeed, she takes out more papers than I have ever seen her do in other places: my birth certificate, my baptismal record, a doctor's letter concerning my bout with chicken pox, rent receipts, records of immunization, a letter about our public assistance payments, even her marriage license — every single paper that has anything even remotely to do with my five-year-old life. Few of the papers are needed here, but it does not matter and my mother continues to pull out the documents with the purposefulness of a magician pulling out a long string of scarves. She has learned that money is the beginning and end of everything in this world, and when the woman finishes, my mother offers her fifty cents, and the woman accepts it without hesitation. My mother and I are just about the last parent and child in the room.

My mother presents the form to a woman sitting in front of the stage, and the woman looks at it and writes something on a white card, which she give to my mother. Before long, the woman who has taken the girl with the drooping curls appears from behind us, speaks to the sitting woman, and introduces herself to my mother and me. She's to be my teacher, she tells my mother. My mother stares.

We go into the hall, where my mother kneels down to me. Her lips are quivering. "I'll be back to pick you up at



twelve o'clock. I don't want you to go nowhere. You just wait right here. And listen to every word she say." I touch her lips and press them together. It is an old, old game between us. She puts my hand down at my side, which is not part of the game. She stands and looks a second at the teacher, then she turns and walks away. I see where she has darned one of her socks the night before. Her shoes make loud sounds in the hall. She passes through the doors and I can still hear the loud sounds of her shoes. And even when the teacher turns me toward the classrooms and I hear what must be the singing and talking of all the children in the world, I can still hear my mother's footsteps above it all.

*"The First Day" from Lost in the City by Edward P. Jones. Copyright (c) 1992, 2005, 2012 by Edward P. Jones. Used by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.*

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What is the central idea of "The First Day"?
  - A. The narrator remembers feeling confident and proud as she begins her first day of school.
  - B. The narrator expresses gratitude to leave her community and family on her first day of school.
  - C. The narrator's teacher demonstrates warmth and kindness to reassure her on her first day of school.
  - D. The narrator's mother feels apprehensive and protective as she takes her daughter to her first day of school.
  
2. How does the conversation in paragraphs 4-7 affect the narrator's mother?
  - A. It causes her mother to feel discouraged and hopeless about her daughter's education.
  - B. It causes her mother to feel disappointed but determined to help her daughter start school.
  - C. It causes her mother to feel enraged about the rules that keep her daughter from attending school.
  - D. It causes her mother to feel disillusioned about the women who teach at the school across from her church.
  
3. Which detail from the story best illustrates that the narrator is feeling nervous on the first day of school?
  - A. "The smell is somehow a soothing one now and I will reach for it time and time again before the morning ends." (Paragraph 1)
  - B. "I am carrying a pencil, a pencil sharpener, and a small ten-cent tablet with a black-and-white speckled cover." (Paragraph 2)
  - C. "On the table beside the woman's pocketbook is a large notebook, worthy of someone in high school, and looking at me looking at the notebook, the girl places her hand possessively on it." (Paragraph 10)
  - D. "My mother looks at me, then looks away. I know almost all of her looks but this one is brand new to me." (Paragraph 17)
  
4. Based on the information in the passage, which of the following is the most plausible reason the narrator's mother stares at her teacher?
  - A. She expected the narrator's teacher to be a man.
  - B. She wants to make the narrator's teacher feel uneasy.
  - C. She is studying the person who will care for her daughter.
  - D. She is showing the narrator how to convey respect to her teacher.

5. How does the repetition of the phrase "This is my mother" affect the meaning of the story?

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# PAIRED TEXT



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Safety of Numbers

By Lucy Tan  
2015

*Lucy Tan is a contemporary author whose writing often explores the meaning of home and family. In this story, a daughter learns some surprising information about her mother's past. As you read, take notes on how the mother's actions and beliefs impact her daughter.*

- [1] When my friend Bobby Klein didn't make it into the gifted program back in fifth grade, Mom said, "What's so hard about IQ? There's nothing you can't study for." She's right, in my case. There is nothing she can't make me study for. She keeps a schedule that she brings out whenever I'm not where I'm supposed to be. On Saturdays, for example, when she catches me leaving through the kitchen door, she points to the red letters that read, SAT. I say, "Yeah Ma, I know it's a Saturday!" and Dad chuckles, which is his way of commiserating.<sup>1</sup>



*"Untitled" by Sean Kong is licensed under CC0.*

My mother is from northern China, a woman with a small face and a big voice and hair that springs from her head so fiercely you're sure it's about to have a word with you. She walks home for lunch every day because she believes in moderate exercise and the health hazards of plastic food containers. She is petrified<sup>2</sup> of credit theft, house theft, car theft, and AIDS; uncomfortable around emotional confrontation and underachievement.

By the time other kids in my year start prepping for the SAT, I have already taken nine months of classes. Twelve, if you count algebra drills. Most of Mom's child-rearing energy is spent on my education, and she's impatient for results. She likes the kinds of success you can plot and graph, reports you can hold in your hand. This makes the SAT the score of all academic scores, representing both a return on one investment<sup>3</sup> and the principal for the next.

"Like the Americans say," she muses, "safety of numbers. That's what colleges want to see."

- [5] "You mean 'safety in numbers',"<sup>4</sup> I tell her. "And that's something completely different."

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1. **Commiserate** (*verb*) to express or feel sympathy or pity
  2. **Petrified** (*adjective*) extremely frightened; terrified
  3. When someone invests money, they hope to get a "return" when it increases in value.
  4. "Safety in numbers" is a figure of speech, meaning that you are safer doing something with a group of people than doing it alone.

She lets out a little laugh. “You think you know everything? The main word there is safety. What do you know about safety?”

“What do you mean?”

“Exactly,” she says, as if that answers anything.

Mom works in the Procurement Department of a Sears satellite office, where she orders desk chairs and tracks the average lifespan of IBM laptops. They’re big into motivation<sup>5</sup> over at Sears. Every so often Mom goes on a company retreat and comes back with posters that say things like CONQUER IT and OPPORTUNITY. She hangs a select few up in the study, but recently, a poster called ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS moved her enough to earn a spot on the kitchen wall. That poster has an image of a running track, where a white hand passes a baton off to a brown hand. I have seen this same picture in our college advisor’s office, except that one said DIVERSITY. I find it troubling that these photos are used for more than one type of motivation, but my best friend Caterina thinks it’s funny. “Your mom and Mrs. Staedtler have the same taste in decorating,” she says. I don’t tell her that there are still more posters in the garage that haven’t made it onto the walls, lesser motivations, like TEAMWORK and ACCEPTANCE. I don’t say that the total supply of motivation in our house could put Mrs. Staedtler out of a job.

[10] During the afternoons, while Mom is still at work, I invite friends over to watch TRL on MTV. Cat gets up to reenact the music videos, and everyone gives her performance points on a scale of one to ten. We write the scores on sticky notes and fix them to ping-pong paddles scavenged<sup>6</sup> from the basement. Then we wave the paddles around and yell and sometimes someone turns to me and says, “I don’t know what you’re talking about — your house is fun!”

After Total Request Live, the reruns of Road Rules and The Real World come on, as well as a relationship show called The Blame Game, in which couples go on TV to expose<sup>7</sup> each other’s flaws. There’s a lot of shouting involved, and it always ends with a karaoke segment. Most of my friends leave before this point, but I watch the whole thing. I love the elements of surprise and power play. Just when you think one person is winning the hearts of the audience, bam! He expects her to hand-wash his underwear! At a quarter to five, I switch the TV back to one of Dad’s channels before turning it off. In my room, I arrange binders around my desk and fabricate fresh eraser dust. By the time Mom gets home, my eyes look bleary from studying instead of watching Ruthie Alcaide run around naked on TV all afternoon.

Some nights, after my parents have gone to bed, Cat rides over on her brother’s bike and parks it under my window. We live in a ranch-style house, so it’s only a four-foot drop from my room, but the window screen isn’t removable. At least, not in the sense that you can put it back afterward. The first time I sneaked out, it was winter. We pulled and pushed on the screen until it started to crack. For every three minutes spent pulling and pushing, we waited one, just in case someone was awake and listening. When it finally came off, Cat propped it up against the house, like a portrait ready to be hung. It stayed there until the spring, when Dad found it while clearing the backyard.

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5. **Motivation** (*noun*) the desire to do something; enthusiasm; determination
  6. **Scavenge** (*verb*) to collect items that have been thrown away
  7. **Expose** (*verb*) to uncover or reveal

"What happened here?" he called from outside.

"I think the wind blew it off."

[15] "Where are we, Kansas?"

"Probably a raccoon then."

"Yeah, that sounds about right," he said. "A raccoon. Or, you know, a stray Cat." He held my gaze just a moment longer than he had to. Then he dragged the screen out front to the garage.

The garage is Dad's hobby shop — full of our neighbors' discarded furniture and lawn equipment lined up and shining like overgrown insects. Crouched next to him out there, and in pauses between the buzzing of his electric sander, I can sometimes get him to talk about Mom's crazy.

"Back in China, college entrance exams were serious stuff," he says. "We had one shot — the gaokao — and that test meant the difference between becoming a scholar and a laborer, between a chance at America and no chance at all. Those scores? They mattered."

[20] There were other scores that mattered. Seventeen million of Mao's youth were sent to the countryside for reeducation. Ten thousand arrested in connection with the June fourth movement.<sup>8</sup> Hundreds to thousands killed at Tiananmen Square.<sup>9</sup> "Isn't that the scariest thing," he says, "the fact that those death-toll numbers are missing?"

"Yeah," I say, but the truth is that I don't really know. I can't imagine the difference between ten thousand and seventeen million. I can't imagine something so abstract as death, or so concrete as Mom's involvement in all this.

"Wait here," he says. He puts down the sander and goes over to the metal shelves that line the back of the garage. Motivational posters land on the floor, and on top of them, the lids of cardboard document boxes. When he comes back, he's holding a faded photo of people standing together in a half circle in front of a school. Mom is there in the center, her head turned and eyes just barely catching the camera, as though distracted in mid-speech.

"She was an activist,"<sup>10</sup> he says. "This was taken in May of 1989. If you think about it, you're in this picture too." I imagine myself over on the other side of the world, a tiny embryo stuck to the inside of her, like a snail.

"You're more like her than you think," he says.

[25] "Yeah, right. How?"

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8. The June fourth movement refers to student-led protests against the Chinese government in 1989.

9. Thousands of protesters were killed or wounded when the Chinese military fired on protesters in Tiananmen Square.

10. **Activist** (*noun*) a person who works to bring about political or social change



"You're fearless."

He hands me a can of Mountain Dew from the stash he keeps hidden in the garage. Mom says Mountain Dew is the color of cancer, and even though I know that cancer doesn't have a color, the thought has put me off Mountain Dew. I drink the soda anyway, and it's not as bad as I remember.

I'm sure Mom has reasons for running our lives the way she does, even if they only hold up in her own mind. Call them superstitions then, or the practices of a self-made faith. Somewhere there is a god that demands double-locking doors and triple-checking my homework. What I want to know is how the politics and the soda connect. In other words, at what point did she become so small in her living of life?

I don't say any of this, but it's as if Dad hears anyway. "They're her stories," he says softly. "I can't tell them."

[30] Later that week, as I am going through my Reading Comprehension study pile, I find that Dad has slipped in a few articles on modern Chinese history. In one of them, there is a picture of twenty or so tanks headed single-file down a broad avenue. At the very corner of the frame, a person stands right up against the first tank. It almost looks as though he or she is directing the artillery,<sup>11</sup> but the caption below reads "Tiananmen Square, June 4, 1989: Civil Disobedience." This person, I think, could be Mom. And the more I stare, the more I'm convinced it is her. The picture is grainy, but I can almost recognize her ferocious hair.

The closer the SAT gets, the more little red letters appear on my schedule. Mom thinks she's being very American by making a baseball metaphor about "going to third base" and then doesn't want to know why I'm laughing. She works from home one day a week so that she can help me with drills after school. Without my friends there, the house feels empty and unfamiliar. Mom counts vocabulary flashcards while I stare into my lap, or at the napkin holder, or at a nearby stack of newspapers on the kitchen table. I wish she would pour herself a drink, the way Cat's mother does when she comes home from work. I wish she would get drunk on sorghum wine like the Chinese families that used to stay with us sometimes. Just off the plane, they had a weird dusty smell on them, as if they'd been shipped straight from Mom's past. They snacked on whole fruits — apples and oranges and round pears with flesh so light it looked translucent. When they drank, they started speaking about the eighties in a way that made Mom go psspsps with her lips. Not in front of the kid.

"Alacrity," Mom says, flipping through the cards. Her tone reminds me of old people playing bingo. "Esoteric."

Sometimes I test her vocabulary too. For instance, I know that on the back of the card that reads "brusque,"<sup>12</sup> there is written only the word "short," so I answer, "vertically challenged," to see if she knows the difference. When she doesn't, I shout in my head Aha! You lose! and squint one eye shut to picture her face on the Blame Game Wall of Shame. Other times, I define words in French or Ebonics. "la mode de ma mère."<sup>13</sup> "Vexed,"<sup>14</sup> she reads, and I answer, "When b— be all up in yo' steez." At this, she drops the deck and glares. "Concentrate on your first language. You can be funny after you get into Harvard."

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11. large guns or cannons used in warfare

12. **Brusque** (*adjective*) responding with few words in a rude way. If someone speaks to you in a "brusque" way, you can also say that person is being "short" with you

13. This French phrase means "my mother's style."

14. **Vex** (*verb*) to make someone feel annoyed, frustrated, or worried

One day, I forget my class project and my keys at home. During sixth period, Cat rides me back to my house on her bike and we try each window, including the one without the screen, but they are locked — all except one. We have to look up to see it. It's two feet high, three feet wide, and positioned six feet off the ground, in the corner of my parents' bedroom. With the help of a garbage bin and a boost from Cat, I wriggle my way through the opening and land on Mom's bureau-top, knocking several things over in the process. But there's no time to clean up, so I grab what I need and leave through the front door.

- [35] That afternoon, there is a cop car parked in the driveway. I walk in to find my mom in the living room with two policemen. When she sees me, she yells, "Someone robbed our house!"

One of the cops standing in our living room is Bobby Klein's dad, and he winks at me discreetly.<sup>15</sup>

"Ma'am," he says, putting a hand on Mom's shoulder, "nothing is missing."

"Yes, yes, but..." She points to the hallway and gives him the look of exasperation she usually saves for supermarket managers and DMV reps. "I came home early. Maybe I scared them away."

Through the doorway of the bedroom, I can see the open window, a felled plant, a trail of soil, and a few bottles of Clinique Moisture-Lock lying on their sides among the rest of the bureau-top battalion.

- [40] "We've searched the house and everything's fine. Maybe a wild animal came in for a little visit, that's all."

At "little visit," Mom glares at Mr. Klein as if he has extended this invitation himself.

"And the missing screen on my daughter's window?" she finishes. "Was that an animal too?"

Now, each morning before she leaves for work, Mom checks to make sure every window and door in our house is locked. "What period is your Euro exam?" (Click.) "And did you finish the second draft of your Tom Stoppard essay?" (Click.) I sip on my orange juice and wait until she leaves. Then I go into her bedroom, unlock the tiny window, and leave it open just an inch.

Seeing Mom panic thrills me. She doesn't call the cops again, but late at night I can hear her talking to Dad about moving money between banks and getting fancy alarm systems installed. Sometimes, in the middle of chopping vegetables or writing a letter, she suddenly closes a hand over her neck to check that her gold chain is still there, or brushes a thumb against her ring finger to feel for her wedding band. One night, I overhear a conversation in their bedroom:

- [45] "You don't believe in spirits, do you?" she asks Dad.

"There aren't any spirits," Dad replies, no follow-up questions asked. He is used to her habit of starting conversations out loud in the middle of the ones already going on inside her head.

I'm not evil, I swear it. But once I start, I can't stop. Cat says this is because there is something lacking in me, a

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15. **Discreet** (*adjective*) careful or low-key; not drawing attention

form of drama that is missing from my life. “It’s like you live in a bad indie movie,” she says. “All mood, no conflict.” What she means is, why don’t I reason with my mother? Why don’t I bring issues to light? Cat doesn’t understand what it’s like to deal with a parent like mine. She has four older brothers, and it’s a rare day if their mom can call them all by the right names. Her family practices Delegated<sup>16</sup> Discipline, which means each kid is in charge of keeping the next youngest in line. Any “reasoning” done by her brothers is carried out through use of their fists.

I’m not good at math. The verbal analogies<sup>17</sup> and sentence completions are easy, but the math gets me every time. “X and Y are not interchangeable,” Mom says. “You have to assign things value.” She stands behind me with a stopwatch as I drill, peering at my pencil marks and blocking the overhead light. “One minute forty-two seconds per question,” she says, doing quick division in her head. “Not fast enough.” After I finish a section, she checks it to identify the types of problems that take me the longest to complete. I like to watch her work for a change, to see the crease between her eyebrows grow into the shape of a butt crack.

That final week of preparations, I barely leave the house at all. Mom has me in bed by nine thirty every night and taking Vitamin C pills every day, just in case. On the Friday before the test, I am concentrating — for once, really concentrating — when she comes into my room and throws bits of colored paper on my desk.

[50] “What is this?” she asks. “8.5? 9.1? 10? ‘I’d do you!’?”

Cat’s performance Post-Its lie there looking defeated, having been crumpled and then smoothed out again. Mom’s hair is bigger than usual, and suddenly I feel my own stand up at the back of my neck, as if some gene of hers has just decided to assert itself, to remind me whose daughter I am.

“You go through my trash?”

Mom blinks a couple times and stands up straight, as if she has been asked a difficult theoretical question. In that moment of triumph, I feel my chest expand and my eyebrows rise a fraction of an inch — this, too, is an expression of hers. The shock of reacting like her twice in twenty seconds makes me look away, and by the time I look back, she is pretending that she hasn’t heard me at all.

“I don’t want you around that girl anymore,” she says quietly.

[55] When I realize she is talking about Cat, my face grows hot. I think of all the words I could use to say how I’m feeling now: irate, livid, incensed. I am one adjective away from bellicose.<sup>18</sup> But they are all too neat to describe the mix of emotions going through me.

“She’s my best friend. You don’t have a say in it.”

Mom blinks at me, leans in.

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16. **Delegate** (*verb*) to assign a task or responsibility to another person

17. **Analogy** (*noun*) a comparison between two things

18. “Irate,” “livid,” “incensed,” and “bellicose” are all words that mean “extremely angry.”

"You think I've never been wild? You think I've never left through a window? Ask me about the last time I tried to leave through a window."

I stare back and say nothing.

[60] "Ask me."

"Fine. What happened the last time you left through a window?"

"My father caught me. I was on my way to Tiananmen Square for a protest. He locked the window from the outside and pushed two cabinets up against the door to keep me in. By the time he let me out, four of my best friends were dead."

The light from my desk lamp glances off her nose and cheekbones in a way that makes her eyes look darker than usual. Then her lips pull back and her chin bunches up. I have never seen her cry, and the fact that she almost does comes as a surprise. But there is nothing surprising to me about her facial expression of pain. I recognize it in a way that feels congenital,<sup>19</sup> that must have something to do with bloodlines. Oh, I think. Of course she would look like that.

"It was supposed to be peaceful," she says. "No one ever thought they would open fire on students. When you're young, you think everyone is on your side. You can't imagine everything you have to lose."

[65] It occurs to me then that there are things about my mom that I know without being told or shown. I know them just because I am her daughter. For example, Dad thinks she's haunted by what could have happened to her at Tiananmen Square. But I know that she's just as haunted by the fact that it didn't.

"I'm sorry about your friends," I say.

She fiddles with the Post-Its on my desk, lines them up in a row. She looks suddenly worn — the exact opposite of her expression from that old photo taken in front of the school. One by one, Mom gathers the bits of paper back up into her palm. She doesn't look at me again until she's at the door. "Time for sleep," she says. "Tonight, rest is your first priority."<sup>20</sup>

The school parking lot is filled with parents and kids passing books, pencils, and calculators between them. My parents stand on the lawn facing the entrance, staring over my shoulder at the registration table.

"I'm OK now," I say, starting to back away.

[70] Mom has forgotten to change out of her flip-flops when leaving the house, and her toes are clenched away from the morning dew.

"You see, honey? She's fine." Dad tugs the flashcards out of her hands. After they send me off, they are headed

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19. **Congenital** (*adjective*) having a trait that is present from birth or inherited from your parents

20. **Priority** (*noun*) something that is more important than other things

to the Ritz Diner for brunch with some of the other nervous parents. I feel bad for Dad. I picture him sitting there, one hand cupping a mug of Lipton tea, the other working the worry out of Mom's fingers.

As she turns to look at me, her brows separate and her nostrils flare. This is her "pep talk" face. She wore it on my first day of ninth grade, and the time I refused to submerge my head during a YMCA swimming lesson, and the time I stood five terrifying feet from my bedroom door, its handle connected to my tooth by a string. Despite her exposure to motivational posters, Mom's pep talks never fail to sound like eulogies.<sup>21</sup>

"I have to go," I say before she can begin.

Mom nods and reaches over to give my arm a squeeze. In that moment, she suddenly looks at me differently, and I look back at her differently. I can't say what's changed, except that it reminds me of an online test that's supposed to tell you whether you're more left-brained or right-brained.<sup>22</sup> There is an image of a dancing girl, and whichever direction you see her turning indicates the way you think. Usually, you can only see her going one way, but occasionally a collection of nerves relaxes in your mind — you become not so you, and then the dancer starts to spin the other way. Something just as delicate is turning between my mother and me. It has been there all along, but for the first time in a long time, we are watching it go in the same direction.

[75] "If you mess up, you can always take it again in June," she says.

So then we're back to normal.

Here's the verbal analogy I've come up with: The SAT is to my future as my future is to Mom's past. The outcome of the first will inform how we feel about the second, even though these connections seem tenuous at best.

If it will make her happy, I will play by these rules. I will suffer the security procedure required — hand over my calculator, my admission ticket, my two IDs. I will write down the codes they assign, bubble in the letters that spell out my name. I am prepared to fly through the verbal sections, pick off math problems in order of difficulty, and rediagram the ones that give me trouble the first time around. I will tell X from Y. I will assign value to all the unknowns.

But after we hand in our papers, while everyone is heading toward the front exit, where the parents are waiting, I will leave through the back. I will run down the empty halls, my fingers trailing along the locker gills, and blast through the gymnasium, out past those heavy doors. There will be no one there except for Cat, waiting at the curb, spinning one bike pedal with her foot. "Get in front," I'll tell her, even though I'm blind with sunshine. "I'll drive."

[80] We avoid the main roads, ride along side streets and through empty elementary-school playgrounds. We cut between two lawns at the end of my cul-de-sac and cross a wooden bridge. Speed picks up as we come down the road — we're holding on with four hands, and then two hands, and then none. At the entrance to the bike trail, our tires snag on a branch, launching us into the air, but Cat's weight on the handlebars keeps our course

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21. **Eulogy** (*noun*) a speech that praises someone who has died

22. People who are logical and like order are considered "right-brained"; people who are creative and artistic are considered "left-brained."

when we land.

"Stunning performance!" she shouts over her shoulder. "Ten out of ten!"

In my bag are a toothbrush and a change of clothes. We are not sure where we're going yet, but we have always wanted to see MTV Studios in New York City. We have dreams of getting on a bus bound for Port Authority and joining the crowd at Times Square. There are neon signs we will wave, cheers we will yell in hopes of being let up to Total Request Live. Cat keeps reminding me how much trouble I'll be in when we get back, but I'm not scared of getting in trouble. What I'm scared of is growing up to be scared. She ducks forward so I can pedal standing, to gain momentum.<sup>23</sup> For one wild moment, as we hurl through the woods, I think I see my mom's face streak between the trees alongside us, trying to keep up.

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23. **Momentum** (*noun*) the force of something that is in motion

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. In paragraphs 19-29, how does the conversation with her dad affect the narrator?
  - A. It causes the narrator to wonder why her mother became an activist.
  - B. It causes the narrator to wonder how her mother lost her fearless nature.
  - C. It causes the narrator to challenge her dad's description of her mother as fearless.
  - D. It causes the narrator to believe that she will never live up to her mother's standards.
  
2. In paragraphs 49-56, what causes the conflict between the narrator and her mother?
  - A. The mother realizes the narrator uses post-it notes to cheat.
  - B. The mother disapproves of the narrator's relationship with Cat.
  - C. The mother blames Cat for the narrator's reluctance to study for the SAT.
  - D. The mother disapproves of the narrator spending her time watching television.
  
3. How does the repetition of "I will" in paragraph 78 contribute to the development of the story?
  - A. It shows the narrator's rejection of what her mother wants.
  - B. It shows that the narrator has given up on being her own person.
  - C. It shows the narrator's willingness to go along with what her mother wants.
  - D. It shows that the narrator's one true desire is to go to college and be successful.
  
4. Which detail from the story best demonstrates how the mother has affected the narrator?
  - A. "I feel bad for Dad. I picture him sitting there, one hand cupping a mug of Lipton tea, the other working the worry out of Mom's fingers." (Paragraph 71)
  - B. "Mom nods and reaches over to give my arm a squeeze. In that moment, she suddenly looks at me differently" (Paragraph 74)
  - C. "There will be no one there except for Cat, waiting at the curb, spinning one bike pedal with her foot. 'Get in front,' I'll tell her, even though I'm blind with sunshine. 'I'll drive.'" (Paragraph 79)
  - D. "Cat keeps reminding me how much trouble I'll be in when we get back, but I'm not scared of getting in trouble. What I'm scared of is growing up to be scared." (Paragraph 82)

5. How does the resolution of the story develop the theme? (Paragraphs 77-82)

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. In the story, the narrator wonders "at what point did [her mother] become so small in her living of life?" What do you think it means to be "small" or "big" in the living of life? Do you think living the way she does makes the narrator's mother happy? Why do you think the narrator is so critical of the way her mother lives her life?
2. Why do you think the story is titled "Safety of Numbers"? How does the title help you understand the mother's motivation? Do you think safety should always be someone's first concern? Why or why not?
3. How would you describe the shift between childhood and adulthood? Which of the narrator's actions in "Safety of Numbers" are childlike? What does the narrator learn that helps propel her into adulthood? What do you predict the narrator will do with her new independence?
4. In the end of the story, the narrator takes a risk that she thinks is worth the consequences. Have you ever taken a risk that was worth the potential consequences? If so, describe the risk and why you decided to take it. What was the outcome?

# ANSWER KEYS



# Answer Key > The First Day

by Edward P. Jones 1992

1. What is the central idea of "The First Day"?

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development; provide an objective or critical summary. **9-10.RL.KID.2**

- A. The narrator remembers feeling confident and proud as she begins her first day of school.
- B. The narrator expresses gratitude to leave her community and family on her first day of school.
- C. The narrator's teacher demonstrates warmth and kindness to reassure her on her first day of school.
- D. The narrator's mother feels apprehensive and protective as she takes her daughter to her first day of school.**

2. How does the conversation in paragraphs 4-7 affect the narrator's mother?

Analyze how complex characters, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text to impact meaning. **9-10.RL.KID.3**

- A. It causes her mother to feel discouraged and hopeless about her daughter's education.
- B. It causes her mother to feel disappointed but determined to help her daughter start school.**
- C. It causes her mother to feel enraged about the rules that keep her daughter from attending school.
- D. It causes her mother to feel disillusioned about the women who teach at the school across from her church.

3. Which detail from the story best illustrates that the narrator is feeling nervous on the first day of school?

Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw inferences; cite the strongest, most compelling textual evidence to support conclusions. **9-10.RL.KID.1**

- A. "The smell is somehow a soothing one now and I will reach for it time and time again before the morning ends." (Paragraph 1)
- B. "I am carrying a pencil, a pencil sharpener, and a small ten-cent tablet with a black-and-white speckled cover." (Paragraph 2)
- C. "On the table beside the woman's pocketbook is a large notebook, worthy of someone in high school, and looking at me looking at the notebook, the girl places her hand possessively on it." (Paragraph 10)
- D. "My mother looks at me, then looks away. I know almost all of her looks but this one is brand new to me." (Paragraph 17)

4. Based on the information in the passage, which of the following is the most plausible reason the narrator's mother stares at her teacher?

Analyze how complex characters, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text to impact meaning. **9-10.RL.KID.3**

- A. She expected the narrator's teacher to be a man.
- B. She wants to make the narrator's teacher feel uneasy.
- C. **She is studying the person who will care for her daughter.**
- D. She is showing the narrator how to convey respect to her teacher.

5. How does the repetition of the phrase "This is my mother" affect the meaning of the story?

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, such as how language evokes a sense of time and place, and how it communicates an informal or formal tone. **9-10.RL.CS.4**

Answers will vary. Students should explain that each repetition of the phrase "This is my mother" introduces an action that highlights the narrator's mother's toughness and dedication to her daughter's education. The first instance of the phrase "This is my mother" comes in a memory of the narrator using a slur of some kind about her neighbors. Paragraph 2 states, "This is my mother: When I say the word in fun to one of my sisters, my mother slaps me across the mouth and the word is lost for years and years." "This is my mother" draws the reader's attention to the mother's strictness and zero tolerance for certain language. Next, after the narrator's mother learns her daughter cannot attend the school of her choice the text states,

"This is my mother: She says, "One monkey don't stop no show" (Paragraph 7). The phrase "This is my mother" draws the reader's attention to the mother's unwillingness to give up. Finally, the narrator uses the phrase when describing her mom filling out the forms to register her for school: "This is my mother: As the questions go on, she takes from her pocketbook document after document, as if they will support my right to attend school, as if she has been saving them up for just this moment" (Paragraph 20). In this case, she is pointing out that her mother is a woman who has prepared in advance to make sure her daughter attends school. The composite of these moments, connected by the phrase "this is my mother" is an image of a tough but loving mother.

# Answer Key > Safety of Numbers

by Lucy Tan 2015

1. In paragraphs 19-29, how does the conversation with her dad affect the narrator?

Analyze how complex characters, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text to impact meaning. **9-10.RL.KID.3**

- A. It causes the narrator to wonder why her mother became an activist.
- B. It causes the narrator to wonder how her mother lost her fearless nature.**
- C. It causes the narrator to challenge her dad's description of her mother as fearless.
- D. It causes the narrator to believe that she will never live up to her mother's standards.

2. In paragraphs 49-56, what causes the conflict between the narrator and her mother?

Analyze how complex characters, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text to impact meaning. **9-10.RL.KID.3**

- A. The mother realizes the narrator uses post-it notes to cheat.
- B. The mother disapproves of the narrator's relationship with Cat.**
- C. The mother blames Cat for the narrator's reluctance to study for the SAT.
- D. The mother disapproves of the narrator spending her time watching television.

3. How does the repetition of "I will" in paragraph 78 contribute to the development of the story?

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, such as how language evokes a sense of time and place, and how it communicates an informal or formal tone. **9-10.RL.CS.4**

- A. It shows the narrator's rejection of what her mother wants.
- B. It shows that the narrator has given up on being her own person.
- C. It shows the narrator's willingness to go along with what her mother wants.**

- D. It shows that the narrator's one true desire is to go to college and be successful.

4. Which detail from the story best demonstrates how the mother has affected the narrator?

Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw inferences; cite the strongest, most compelling textual evidence to support conclusions. **9-10.RL.KID.1**

- A. "I feel bad for Dad. I picture him sitting there, one hand cupping a mug of Lipton tea, the other working the worry out of Mom's fingers." (Paragraph 71)
- B. "Mom nods and reaches over to give my arm a squeeze. In that moment, she suddenly looks at me differently" (Paragraph 74)
- C. "There will be no one there except for Cat, waiting at the curb, spinning one bike pedal with her foot. 'Get in front,' I'll tell her, even though I'm blind with sunshine. 'I'll drive.'" (Paragraph 79)
- D. "Cat keeps reminding me how much trouble I'll be in when we get back, but I'm not scared of getting in trouble. What I'm scared of is growing up to be scared." (Paragraph 82)**

5. How does the resolution of the story develop the theme? (Paragraphs 77-82)

Analyze how complex characters, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text to impact meaning. **9-10.RL.KID.3**

The resolution of "Safety of Numbers" emphasizes the theme that preparing for the future is important, but taking risks is also an essential part of growing up. In the story, the narrator's mother is obsessed with making the narrator study and plan for college. The narrator eventually gives in, noting, "If it makes her happy, I will play by the rules" (Paragraph 78). As she explains, "the SAT is to my future as my future is to Mom's past" (Paragraph 77). In other words, she realizes that her performance on the SAT will play an important role in how her life plays out. Despite this realization, the narrator does not completely accept the idea of always playing it safe. On the day of her exam, she reveals that after the test, she will sneak out the back door and head to New York City on an adventure with her best friend. She knows she will be in trouble, but notes, "I'm not scared of getting in trouble. What I'm scared of is growing up to be scared" (Paragraph 82). Put another way, she is afraid of who she will become if she lacks the courage to take some risks in life. Ultimately, the narrator's decision to strike out on an adventure immediately

after taking the SAT reveals the theme that it is necessary to both play it safe and to take risks in life.