



# Instruction Coach 5 English Language Arts



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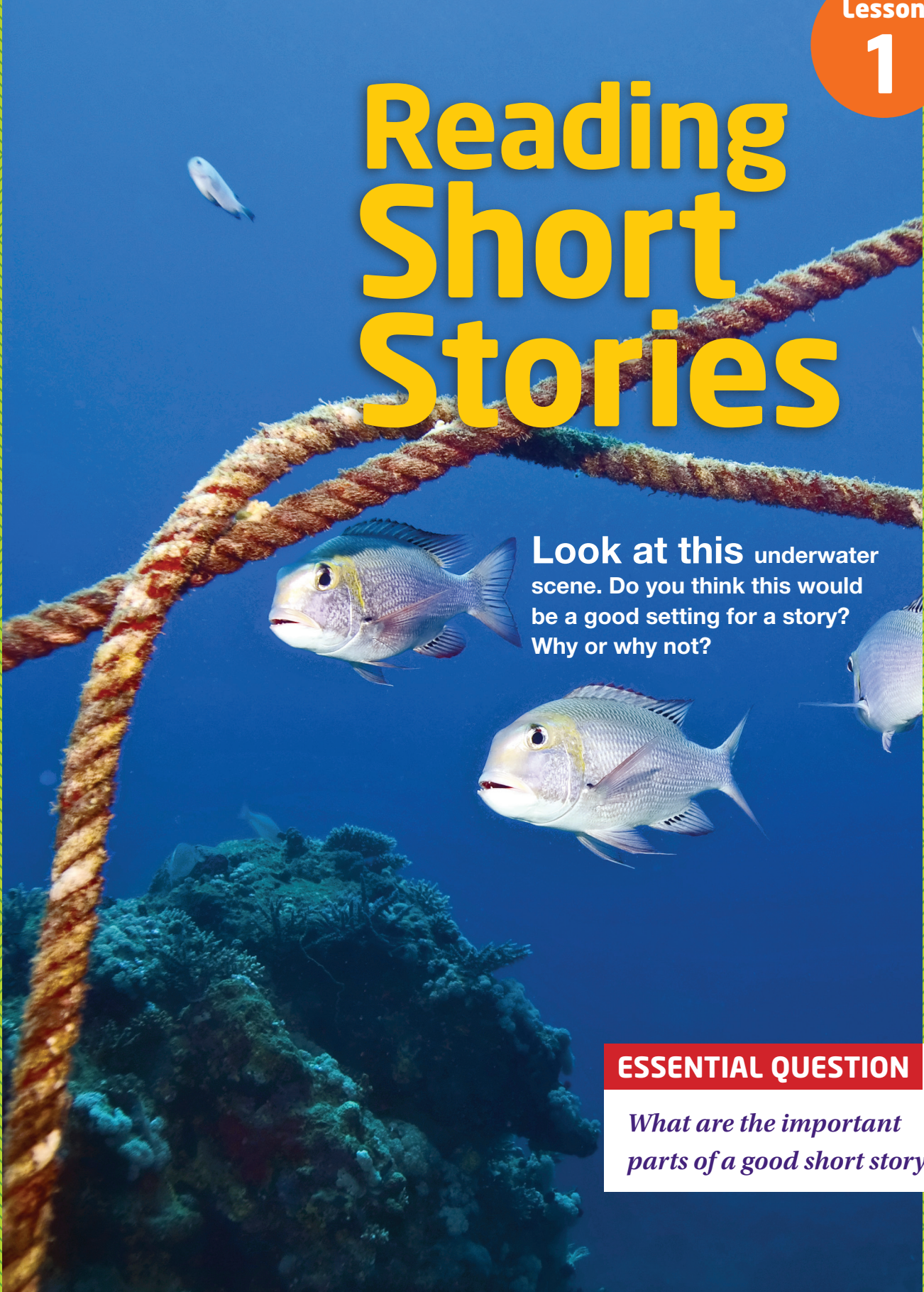
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# Reading Short Stories

An underwater scene featuring several fish swimming near a large, brown, textured rope structure. The background is a deep blue ocean with a coral reef visible at the bottom. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Look at this underwater scene. Do you think this would be a good setting for a story? Why or why not?

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*What are the important parts of a good short story?*



## Listen and Learn

### Consider ►

How do you get to know the characters in a short story?  
Can you usually tell right away whether you like the characters?

# A Snare for Srayosi

## Chapter 1

**SHORT STORY** A short story is a short fictional narrative with a beginning, middle, and ending. A short story is told in far fewer words than a novel. Important parts of a short story are characters, setting, and plot. What characters are described on this page? What do you learn about them?

**NARRATOR** The narrator of a short story is the person who tells the story. If the story is told by one of the characters in the story, it is told from the first-person point of view. In first-person point of view, the narrator uses the pronoun *I*. If the story is told by someone who is not a character in the story, it is told from the third-person point of view. In third-person point of view, the narrator uses the pronouns *he*, *she*, and *they*. Who is the narrator of this story? How do you know?

1 Srayosi tried to wriggle free from the ropes around her wrists and ankles and then looked over at her twin brother. Shah was gesturing desperately, shaking his head back and forth wildly. Like Srayosi, his hands and feet were tied, and they were both trapped underwater, at the bottom of an aquarium tank designed for marine mammals, not humans.

Srayosi knew that average people can hold their breath for approximately thirty seconds. Luckily, Srayosi and Shah were far from average. They would have exactly seven minutes and twelve seconds to escape from their bindings and swim to the surface. The twin teens had been practicing holding their breath since they were babies. It was part of how they grew up.





Unluckily, their focus on escaping was interrupted by a loud grinding noise. The walls of the tank began to move inward, making the room inside the tank smaller and smaller, while the water rose higher and higher. Srayosi and Shah might have six minutes of breath left, but they would be crushed in less than three.

Srayosi's mind began racing faster and faster. She calculated that she had forty-five seconds to think of a solution and two minutes to get untied, untie Shah, swim to the top of the tank, and climb out. Fifteen seconds had already ticked away.

- 5 Srayosi looked for a tool she could use to get the ropes off her hands. But then Srayosi noticed that the glass floor of the tank was covered with slimy algae. She scooped some of it into her fingers and began to rub it on the ropes around her wrists.

Srayosi wriggled her wrists back and forth and scrunched her long, narrow fingers as tightly as possible. The slippery algae helped reduce the friction between her skin and the rope. In less than twenty seconds, Srayosi's hands were free.

**PLOT** The plot of a story is its series of events. The first part of the plot tells the story's basic situation—the characters, setting, and conflict. The conflict is a problem or struggle that the characters must face. As the characters deal with the problem, obstacles get in their way. The problem or conflict grows more and more serious; we describe this by saying that the action "rises." The point where the problem is most serious is called the climax, or the high point, of the story. What problems have Srayosi and Shah faced so far?





**CITE EVIDENCE** When you cite evidence, you look for information in the text that supports your thinking. What do you know about Shah's character? How does he look and act? Do you think he is a good brother? What information in the story leads you to believe this?

**CHAPTERS** Chapters are sections of a story. Often, the last part of a chapter will give a clue about what comes next. Chapter 1 ends with Shah meditating and relying on his sister to solve their predicament. What do you think will happen in the next chapter?

If Shah could have spoken, he would have said, "Great, Sis!" Instead, he followed her lead and began scooping up algae, too. There was just one problem. Srayosi and Shah were twins, but physically, they couldn't have been more different. Srayosi was small and thin, while Shah was tall and muscular. Shah's size usually came in handy, but his huge size wasn't very useful at the moment.

Most people saw Shah's size and made the assumption that he was a hothead. In reality, Shah was able to remain cool in even the most torturous circumstances. In this situation, Shah quickly understood that no matter how much algae he used, he was never going to wriggle his humongous hands through the ropes. He began to meditate, knowing that his sister would figure a way out for the both of them. She always did.





## Chapter 2

Exactly one and a half minutes had passed, and Srayosi was completely untied. She knew that she didn't have time to untie Shah completely. She also knew that she couldn't leave him there. Srayosi had only one firm plan in mind. She would untie the weight that was holding Shah down, push him to the surface, climb out of the tank, and then pull her brother to safety.

10 Step one was a bit challenging. Srayosi had no prior experience with the knot connecting the rope to the weight. But her quick wit and able fingers worked in harmony, and she untied Shah in twenty-seven seconds. The next step was not very challenging at all. Srayosi gave Shah a shove, and he wiggled his way to the surface of the water. Shah even gave Srayosi a nod as he swam to the surface. This was going better than Srayosi had imagined.

She climbed up onto the surface of the tank and grabbed Shah under his arms. Then she pulled with all her might. Nothing happened. She couldn't lift Shah's massive, wet body out of the tank.

**NARRATOR** A narrator can have different points of view. If the point of view is omniscient, the narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of all the characters in the story. If the point of view is limited, the narrator knows only one character's thoughts and feelings.

Sometimes a narrator expresses an opinion by the way he or she tells a story. Other times, the narrator is objective. The narrator presents the action and the characters' speech without comment or emotion and does not reveal the thoughts of the characters. The reader has to interpret them and uncover their meaning. How does the narrator's point of view in this story influence how events are described?





### MAKE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TEXTS

Often, stories in the same genre, or type, have similar features. For example, fairy tales often include a member of a royal family and some type of magic. When you make connections between similar texts, you note their similarities and differences. What similarities do you see in this story and other adventure stories you have read? How is this story different from them? Whom do you think the footsteps belong to? What have you read in other stories that would lead you to believe that?

### SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The sequence of events is the order in which things happen in a story. The sequence of events in a plot usually moves forward. However, sometimes the author goes back in time to tell about something that happened in the past. Where in this story does the author use this technique?

The tank's walls were now about four feet apart. Shah was at least three feet wide himself. Srayosi felt defeated, but she wasn't about to give up. That's when she heard the sound of footsteps.

"The IOATP!" Srayosi yelled. "They're coming, Shah! You've got to get out. DO SOMETHING!"

As it turned out, Srayosi was the hothead. She had tried meditating, but it was never her thing. When the going got tough, Srayosi's blood started boiling. She believed this made her brain work fast when she was under pressure. But now, she was at her wit's end. They had to get out before the IOATP found them.

15 The IOATP were the International Organization Against Teen Power. Srayosi and Shah were part of an international society of teens trained since birth to fight crime and injustice. They weren't superheroes, but they were pretty super. Villains everywhere hated them and formed their own group to battle them—the IOATP. They had put Srayosi and Shah in the tank in the first place.





Srayosi tried one last time to lift her brother from the tank. The footsteps were right behind her. Things were bad, yet Shah was smiling.

“Mom!” Shah cheered as his muscled mother reached past Srayosi and pulled him to safety. Srayosi had inherited her mother’s hotheadedness, but it was Shah who got her size and strength.

“How did you find us?” Srayosi wondered aloud.

“Shah and I have been working on meditative transmissions,” she explained. “He’s able to send me mental pictures when he meditates. I saw where you were, and I knew you needed me.”

20 “Mom to the rescue,” Shah said.

“Always!” their mom replied lovingly. “Now let’s get out of here. I set some explosives, and they’re about to go off in 5...4...3...2...”

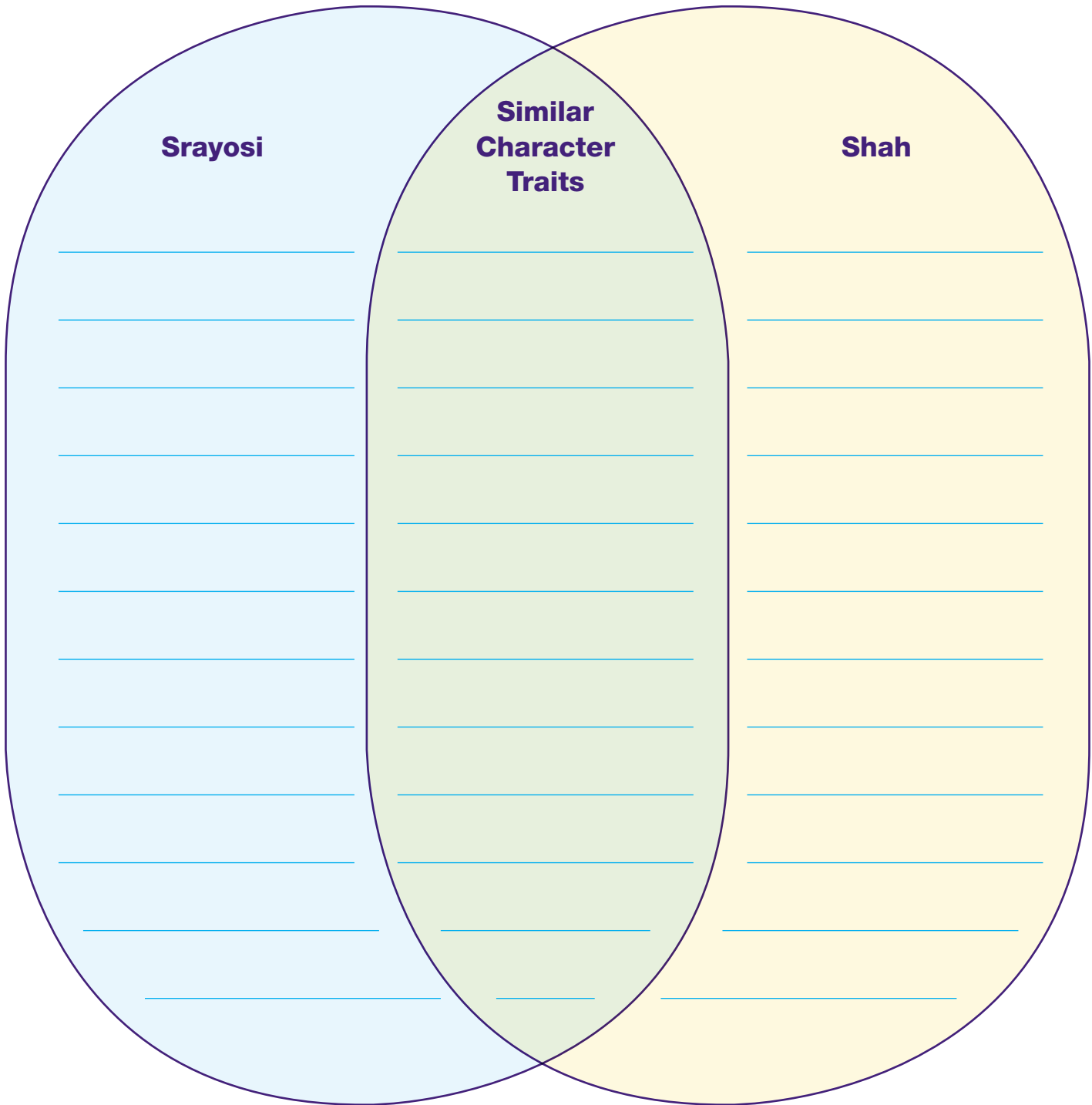
**PLOT** The plot of a story ends when the problems have been resolved. This is called the resolution. What is the resolution of this story?

**THEME** The theme of a short story is its message about life. Usually, the author doesn’t directly tell you the theme. You have to figure it out yourself by looking at the characters, their words and actions, and the setting of the story. What do you think is the theme of this story?



## Comprehension Check

Think about what you learned about the main characters in “A Snare for Srayosi.” Look back through the story for evidence that tells you about their character traits in the things they do, the words they say, and in how they are described. Think about how they are alike and how they are different. Then use the information to fill in the Venn diagram below.



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## Vocabulary

Use the word map below to help you define and use one of the highlighted vocabulary words from the Share and Learn selection you are about to read or another word you choose.

reckless	nimble	foreboding
corridor	massive	nestled

<b>Synonyms</b>	<b>Antonyms</b>

<b>My word</b>	
----------------	--

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Other forms</b>

<b>My sentence</b>



## Share and Learn

### Consider ▶

How do you feel when you go to a place you've never been before?

Do you like to rush right in or take your time?

# Into the Maze

### CHARACTER TRAITS

What do you learn about the traits of Theo and his friend Ariana early in the story?

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Underline the words that tell you about Theo, and circle the words that describe Ariana.

1 Theo took one tentative step into the corn maze, then stopped in his tracks. He grabbed a dried husk and examined it. The corn stalk had to be at least double his height, around twelve feet tall. The plants were packed together so tightly, it was difficult to see through them. Walls of corn wound this way and that, with no end in sight. For a place that was supposed to be the area's main attraction, it was eerily quiet. Of course, Ariana had raced right in. "Act first, think later" was her motto.





“Ariana!” Theo shout-whispered to his best friend.  
“Come back!”

Ariana rushed back to the start of the maze, breathless. Her cheeks were flushed with excitement.

“This is so cool, Theo!” she said. “What are you waiting for?”

5 “I’m waiting because it’s the right thing to do, Ariana,” Theo said sensibly. “We can’t just rush in here without having a plan.”

“Oh, right, a plan,” Ariana replied. “You’re the planner. What’s our plan?”

Theo sighed. He loved Ariana’s sense of adventure. She was willing to do anything and go anywhere on a moment’s notice, like heading to this strange place just because their new team trainer had given her a “special event” pass to it.

Mr. Minos was okay as far as trainers go, but Theo wasn’t about to follow him to the ends of the earth—or into a deserted maze, especially when they had the big lacrosse championship game later that day. Seriously, Ariana should have known better. But she had been too excited about the adventure to worry about the game.

“Ariana, I agree that this looks like an interesting place,” Theo said. “But why isn’t anybody here? Isn’t this supposed to be a special event?”

10 “It is a little odd, Theo,” Ariana said. “But you’re the one who made us leave the dorms an hour before we needed to. Maybe everyone’s coming fashionably late.”

“Doubtful,” Theo said. “Anyway, I’m not taking another step into this maze until we figure out a way to track our path. If we can find the way we went in, we can always find a way out.”

“Good plan, planner,” Ariana replied as she shuffled through the pockets of her windbreaker. “Except that I didn’t bring anything we could use. I only have a blue highlighter I forgot to take out of my pocket the last time I wore this jacket.”

“That will do,” Theo said. “We can mark a stalk every few feet.”

### MAKE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TEXTS

How are Theo and Ariana similar to the twins Srayosi and Shah in the previous story? How are they different?

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**NARRATOR** Who is telling this story? Is the story told from a limited or omniscient point of view? Is the narrator objective? How do you know?

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**PLOT** What is the conflict in this story?

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How can you tell the action of the story is rising, or that the conflict is growing more serious?

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Underline the sentence that shows rising action.

**MAKE CONNECTIONS: TEXT-TO-SELF** Have you ever traveled to an unfamiliar place with a friend or relative? How did having someone to share the adventure with affect your experience?

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The two friends headed into the maze. The fall air was crisp and brisk, and now that he had a plan in place, Theo decided to relax and enjoy the experience. He liked spending time with Ariana, even though she could be a little **reckless** at times. Plus, it was a good opportunity to go over their game plan. Since Theo was the goalie and Ariana a defender, they needed to work together and communicate well. Ariana had a lot more experience than he did. While they talked about game strategy, Theo's shoulders began to drop and his forehead unfurrowed. And that's when the giant metal crow swooped down from the sky.

15 "DUCK!" a voice boomed as loud as thunder.

Theo and Ariana used their **nimble**, athletic reflexes to duck to the ground just before the robot bird reached them.

"What is that?" Theo yelled to Ariana. "And who told us to duck?"

"RUN!" the invisible voice commanded.

"I don't know!" Ariana screamed back. "But I think we'd better listen!"

20 Theo led the dash down the path. The mechanical flying beast turned awkwardly above the maze and headed back toward them.

"STOP!" the voice roared.

"Stop?" Ariana questioned. "That doesn't seem like such great advice."

Theo had already stopped in his tracks.

"Whoever it is, I think we'd better pay attention," Theo said. "Look!"

25 Theo pointed to a hoe that was lying on the ground. Ariana picked it up and smiled. The best defense is a good offense.





Ariana looked up as the creature came closer and closer toward them. She could see a space in the joint that held the wing to the bird's body. She had one chance, so her aim would have to be perfect. The crow dove toward them, and Ariana raised the stick side of the hoe and lodged it in the joint. The gears inside the crow started grinding. The crow tumbled and then crashed to the ground, its gears clanging loudly for a moment until they stopped working completely.

"Okay, you were right," Ariana said to Theo. "This place is creepy. We should just get back to the dorms."

"Great plan," Theo agreed. "But we didn't have time to mark our path when we were running away from the crow. So . . . which way do we go?"

"We came this way," Ariana said as she led Theo back down the path. "And then we turned right, and then left, and then, well, then I'm not so sure, honestly."

30 "Me neither," Theo admitted. "I think we made another left."

"ARE YOU SURE?" the voice boomed. "YOU SHOULD BE SURE."



**CITE EVIDENCE** Why was Ariana reminded that “looks are often deceiving”?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Underline the sentences that explain your answer.

**MAKE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TEXTS** How is the plot of this story similar to the plot of “A Snare for Srayosi”? How are the plots different?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

“Who are you?” Theo yelled back. “And if you want to help us, just tell us how to get out of here.”

“BWAHAHAHA!” the **foreboding** voice laughed. “I COULD, BUT I WON’T. YOU’RE BOTH SCHOLAR-ATHLETES. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIGURE IT OUT FOR YOURSELVES.”

“Gee, thanks for the compliment,” Ariana replied. “Much appreciated.”

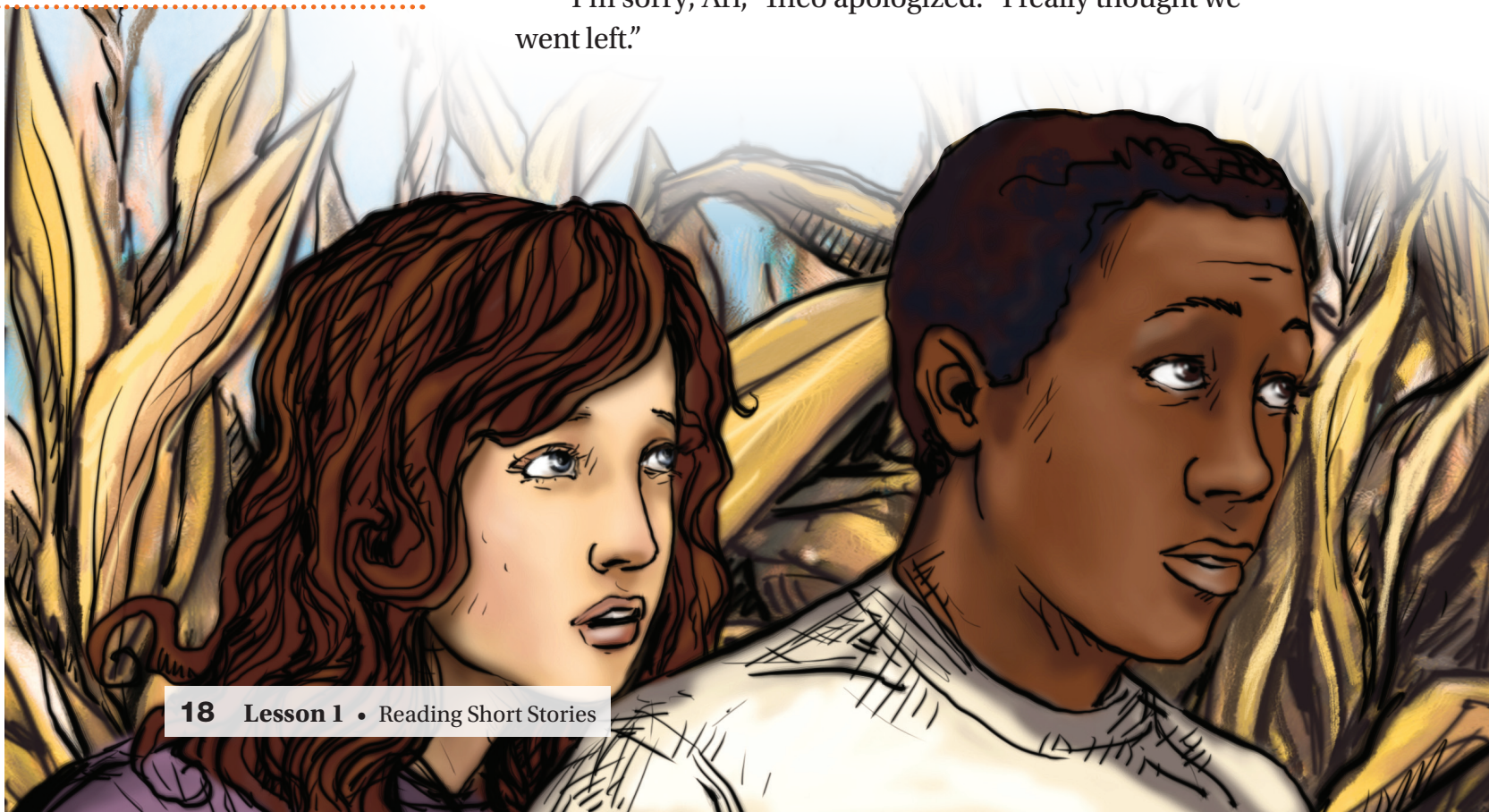
35 “DON’T MOCK THE MAZE MASTER,” the voice warned. “YOU WILL REGRET IT.”

“Sorry,” Ariana answered. “Didn’t know you were so touchy.”

“Let’s just go,” Theo said. “I’m pretty sure it was left.”

Ariana followed Theo as he led her through the winding maze. He turned the corner quickly and headed down a long **corridor** of corn, then turned right at the end of the path, then made another quick left. He definitely looked as if he knew where he was going. But when they came to a dead end at a solid wall of corn, Ariana was reminded that looks are often deceiving.

“I’m sorry, Ari,” Theo apologized. “I really thought we went left.”





40 “No problem, Theo,” Ariana replied. “I got us into this mess. I’ll get us out.”

Ariana started back the way they had come. The sun was rising higher in the sky as the day got closer to noon. Even though the autumn weather was cool, Ariana took off her jacket and tied it around her waist. All the running and worrying was making her hot.

“PUT YOUR JACKET BACK ON!” the voice ordered. “YOU’RE GOING TO NEED A WINDBREAKER.”

“Um . . . okay,” Ariana said. “What does that mean?”

Ariana and Theo turned as they heard an unfamiliar sound in the distance. The sound swirled and whirled, and when the two turned the next corner of the maze, they saw an immense vortex headed their way.

45 “TORNADO TIME!” the Maze Master informed them. “ARE YOU READY FOR A WEATHER EMERGENCY?”

This time it was Ariana who shouted the commands.

“RUN!” she yelled as she grabbed Theo’s hand and led him away from the tornado.

“PULL!” she cried as she grabbed a corn stalk and ripped it from the ground.

“DIG!” she commanded as she scooped away dirt to make a trench in the ground.

### AUTHOR’S BACKGROUND AND CULTURE

The author lives in a large city but spends her summers in the country, where there are corn mazes. How might this story be different if the author had never seen a corn maze?

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### MAKE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN TEXTS

Both this story and “A Snare for Srayosi” include mysterious or unexplained elements. What are the most mysterious elements of each story?

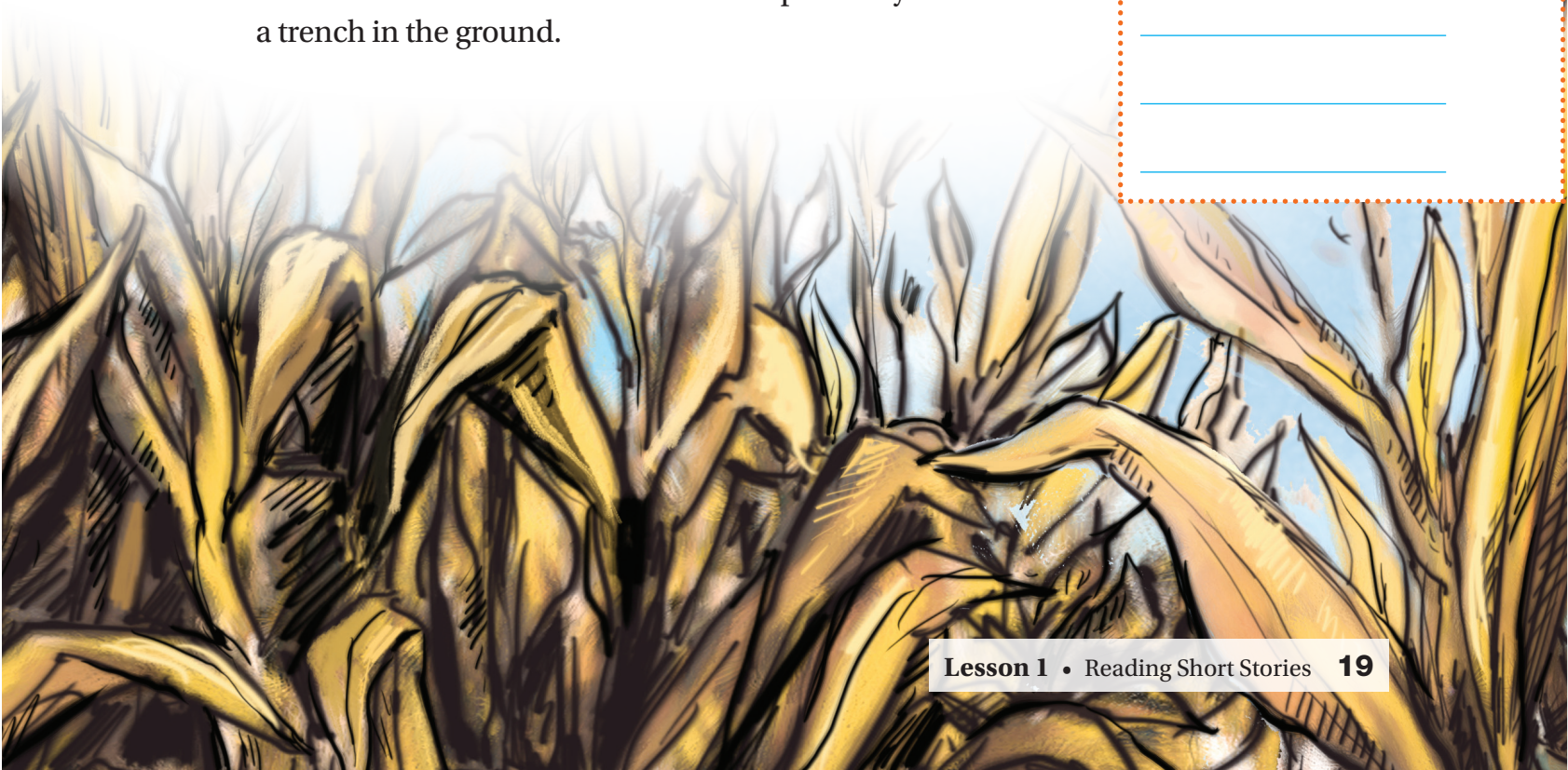
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50 Ariana and Theo jumped into the trench and lay flat in it. Ariana pulled the corn stalks over them. They held hands and waited. And waited. The tornado never came. It must have headed down another corn aisle before it disappeared. Ariana and Theo emerged from the trench.

**PLOT** Ariana and Theo survive the tornado. Do you think this is where the conflict will end? Why or why not?

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“Hey, Ari, that was impressively quick thinking,” Theo said. “But did you really think a little trench and some dead corn stalks were going to protect us from a tornado?”

Ariana playfully punched her friend and laughed out loud.

“Well, it was better than nothing!” she replied.

Theo brushed the husks from his clothing, then off of Ariana’s back.

55 “Wow, look at that!” he said as he pointed in the distance.

The tornado hadn’t hit them, but it had damaged the maze. There was a large, clear circle where fields of corn had been standing only a few minutes earlier.

“I bet if we search the edges of that circle, we’ll find one of our highlights!” Ariana said.

“Great minds think alike!” Theo replied. “That’s just what I was thinking. You go left, and I’ll go right. We’ll meet at the bottom of the circle. This way we can do the search in half the time.”

“Great plan, as always,” said Ariana. “Let’s go!”





60 Ariana knew that they had made the highlights at eye level, so she quickly started around the circle, looking for a sign that they had been down a path before. She was nearly at the bottom of the circle when she saw the blue highlight on the brown, dried leaf.

“Theo!” she yelled. “I found it!”

But when Ariana turned around, Theo was nowhere in sight. And that’s when she heard him scream.

Ariana raced toward the sound of Theo’s voice. She darted down a row of corn and almost raced into the most **massive** spider web she had ever seen in her life. Then she stepped back and gasped. Theo was trapped by the web. And a giant spider was headed his way!

“YOU NEED TO TAKE CONTROL, ARIANA,” the voice directed.

65 “Control? What’s that supposed to mean?” Ariana asked. “And how do you know my name?”

Ariana spied something small and black **nestled** in the light brown leaves. It was a remote control. The spider was two long-legged steps away from her teammate. Theo had stopped screaming and had closed his eyes. Ariana did need to take control. She pushed the stop button, and the spider became immobile.

**MAKE CONNECTIONS: TEXT-TO-WORLD** How are the events in this story like events that could happen in the real world? How are they unlike real-world events?

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**PLOT** The climax is the high point in the action of a short story. What is the climax of this story?

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Underline the sentences that tell you about it.



### SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Underline the sentence that tells about events that happened prior to the events described in the story.

**PLOT** What is the resolution of this story?

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### DETERMINE THEME

What do you think the theme of this story is? How is it similar to the theme of the story "A Snare for Srayosi"? How is it different?

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Ariana pulled Theo from the web. They rushed back to the entrance of the maze just as sirens began to blare. Two police cruisers pulled up, and the team's lacrosse coach, Ms. Ethra, jumped out of one of them.

"Where's Mr. Minos?" she questioned.

"Mr. Minos?" asked Ariana. "What's he got to do with this?"

70 "YOU'LL NEVER FIND ME!" the voice challenged.

"Mr. Minos!" Theo and Ariana said at the same time.

"When your teammates told me Mr. Minos had given you the pass to the maze, I started wondering," Ms. Ethra explained.

"Mr. Minos holds the state record for saves," a police officer explained. "He was a goalie twenty years ago, and no one's even come close since then. But he knew that the combination of a hot goalie with a stellar defender was a real threat. He decided to eliminate the competition."

"I NEVER MEANT TO HURT YOU," Mr. Minos called through the air. "I JUST WANTED YOU TO MISS THE GAME."

75 "We'll take care of him," the officer assured them. "But you two have a game to play. You'd better go."

Theo and Ariana got in the car and smiled at each other. They'd have just enough time on the ride back to finalize their game plan. It was going to be the best one ever.



## Discussion Questions

Discuss the following questions with your peer group. Then record your answers in the space provided.

1. Do you think Theo and Ariana are ever in real danger in the story? Why or why not? Support your answer with details from the text.

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2. Look back at the words the narrator uses to describe Theo and Ariana throughout the story. Do you think the narrator favors one character over the other? Explain why or why not, citing specific details from the text as support.

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## Comprehension Check

1. Why do Theo and Ariana go to the corn maze?

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2. Do you think Theo and Ariana work well together as a team? Cite details from the text that support your opinion.

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3. Based on what you know about Theo and Ariana, do you think they will win the lacrosse championship? Why or why not?

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## Read On Your Own

Read another story, “The Famous Merkel,” independently. Apply what you learned in this lesson and check your understanding.