Plot, Episodes, and Character Change

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

A plot unfolds in episodes — short stretches where something happens that pushes the story forward. Watch how each episode changes a character: what they say, what they choose, and what they now know that they did not know before.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Relay Anchor

Devon had run the anchor leg of the 4x400 relay for two seasons, and for two seasons he had run it the same way — hold back for the first 200 meters, then sprint past everyone in the final straight. It worked because Devon was the fastest finisher on the team, and because his coach, Ms. Kalu, never asked him to be anything else. So when Ms. Kalu pulled him aside the Wednesday before the district meet and told him she was moving him to the SECOND leg, Devon stared at her without speaking, because he could not think of a single sentence that would not sound like a complaint.

He tried, at first, to argue without arguing. He suggested they could try Ronnie at second leg instead. He mentioned, casually, that he had set the team's anchor record only six weeks ago. Ms. Kalu listened, waited, and then said, "Marcus is a stronger anchor than people think, and you are a stronger second leg than I have used. The team needs both of those things to be true on Saturday." Devon nodded, because nodding was what he did when he disagreed. He walked home with his bag on one shoulder and a feeling in his chest like a door that would not quite close.

On Thursday at practice, Devon ran his second leg badly on purpose. Not so badly that anyone could prove it, but badly enough that he felt the small, sour satisfaction of being right. Ms. Kalu watched the lap, said nothing to him, and after practice asked Marcus to stay late. Devon walked past the track twice on his way to the bus and saw Marcus, alone, running 300-meter intervals while Ms. Kalu held the stopwatch and called out splits. Devon stood at the fence for a long time before he understood what he was watching. Then he got on the bus.

On Saturday at the district meet, Devon took the baton from the first runner and ran the second leg as hard as he had ever run anything. He passed two teams on the back straight and handed the baton off to Marcus in third place, breathing in a way he had never breathed in a race. Marcus ran the third leg cleanly. The anchor ran them into first place by half a second. After the race, Ms. Kalu did not say "I told you so." She handed Devon a paper cup of water and said, "Now you know what your second leg is for." Devon drank the water and did not say anything, because for the first time in three days he agreed.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the passage to answer each question. Pay attention to how each episode changes Devon.

1. What is the INCITING EVENT of the story — the moment that sets the plot in motion?

   A. Devon has run the anchor leg of the 4x400 relay for two seasons.

   B. Ms. Kalu tells Devon on Wednesday that she is moving him to the second leg.

   C. Devon walks past the track and sees Marcus running intervals.

   D. Devon takes the baton from the first runner at the district meet.

2. Which sentence BEST describes Devon's response in paragraph 2 to being moved to second leg?

   A. He openly refuses to run second leg and threatens to quit the team.

   B. He argues quietly by suggesting other runners and listing his own record, without admitting he is upset.

   C. He thanks Ms. Kalu sincerely and asks how he can prepare.

   D. He stops speaking to his coach completely from Wednesday onward.

3. What is the MAIN function of paragraph 3 — the episode at Thursday's practice — in the plot?

   A. It shows Devon making a small choice (running badly on purpose) that he will later regret.

   B. It introduces a new character named Marcus for the first time.

   C. It explains the rules of the 4x400 relay event.

   D. It proves that Ms. Kalu is a bad coach who plays favorites.

4. What does Devon LEARN from watching Marcus run intervals with Ms. Kalu after practice?

   A. He learns that Marcus is faster than he is in every distance.

   B. He learns that Ms. Kalu is preparing Marcus carefully — she has a plan that does not depend on Devon's approval.

   C. He learns that the coach is going to remove him from the team entirely.

   D. He learns that Marcus does not want to run the anchor leg either.

5. How does Devon CHANGE from Wednesday to Saturday?

   A. He goes from being the team's fastest runner to being one of the slowest.

   B. He goes from secretly resisting his new role to giving the new role his full effort.

   C. He goes from trusting his coach to refusing to listen to her again.

   D. He goes from running the relay to choosing a different event entirely.

6. What does Ms. Kalu's line "Now you know what your second leg is for" MOST STRONGLY suggest about her teaching?

   A. She believes Devon should figure out the reason behind a decision by RUNNING it, not by being told.

   B. She believes Devon is not yet good enough to run anchor and never will be.

   C. She is making fun of Devon for arguing with her on Wednesday.

   D. She is admitting that she made a mistake by moving him.

7. Which sentence BEST describes the RESOLUTION of the plot?

A. Devon runs a fast second leg, Marcus runs anchor, and the team wins district by half a second.

B. Devon refuses to run the second leg and quits the team in protest.

C. Ms. Kalu apologizes to Devon and moves him back to the anchor leg.

D. Marcus admits that he was not ready to run the anchor leg after all.

8. Look at this line from paragraph 2: "He walked home with his bag on one shoulder and a feeling in his chest like a door that would not quite close." What does this detail MOST STRONGLY suggest about Devon at this point in the story?

A. He is calm and ready to accept his new role.

B. He is mildly amused by the unexpected change.

C. He is left with an unsettled, unresolved feeling that he cannot put away.

D. He is physically tired from running practice that day.

9. Choose ONE specific episode from the story (Wednesday's conversation, Thursday's bad leg, Thursday's after-practice watching, or Saturday's race). In 2-3 sentences, explain how that single episode pushes Devon's character toward the choice he makes on Saturday.

_____

_____

10. Explain ONE way Devon at the END of the story is DIFFERENT from Devon at the START. Use a specific detail or quote from each part of the story to support your answer.

_____

_____

Answer Keys

1	A	**B**	C	D	6	**A**	B	C	D
2	A	**B**	C	D	7	**A**	B	C	D
3	**A**	B	C	D	8	A	B	**C**	D
4	A	**B**	C	D	9	See below			
5	A	**B**	C	D	10	See below			

Explanations

1. B	The plot starts moving the moment Devon's role is changed against his expectation — every episode after this is a response to that change. A is BACKGROUND (what he used to do); C is a later episode that depends on B already having happened; D is the climax, not the inciting event.
2. B	He "tried to argue without arguing" — suggesting Ronnie, mentioning the record — indirect resistance. A is too loud (no refusal, no threat); C is the OPPOSITE of his actual feeling; D is too extreme (he is back at practice Thursday).
3. A	Devon's deliberate slow leg is the LOW POINT of his character arc — the small bad choice that the rest of the story will answer. B is wrong because Marcus is named in paragraph 2; C invents a rules-explanation that does not happen; D reads judgment into a coach who is shown working overtime with Marcus.
4. B	Marcus alone on the track + Ms. Kalu with the stopwatch = the coach quietly proving her decision is built on work, not whim. A is too broad (the text only says Ms. Kalu is preparing him, not that he beats Devon at every distance); C reads a worst-case the text does not support; D invents Marcus's feelings the text never gives.
5. B	Wednesday: quiet argument. Thursday: deliberate slow leg. Saturday: "as hard as he had ever run anything." That arc is resistance → commitment. A swaps speed for role and is wrong on both; C is the OPPOSITE of the ending (he agrees with her); D invents a new event not in the text.
6. A	She refuses "I told you so," then names the lesson the race itself taught him — teaching by experience. B reads a permanent demotion the text does not give; C invents mockery in a calm post-race moment; D contradicts the result (the team won).
7. A	The race + the win + the post-race exchange resolves every thread the inciting event opened — that is the textbook resolution. B contradicts the actual race result; C contradicts "She did not say I told you so"; D contradicts "The anchor ran them into first place by half a second."
8. C	A door that will not quite close is a CLEAR image for something that is not yet settled — a perfect match for an unresolved feeling. A is the OPPOSITE; B reads humor into a heavy line; D is a literal misreading (he has not yet run that day's practice in the scene).

9.	**Answer:** Strong answers connect ONE chosen episode to the Saturday choice with a clear chain: e.g., Thursday's after-practice watching — seeing Ms. Kalu work alone with Marcus shows Devon that the decision is built on real preparation, not personal preference, which makes his Thursday sabotage feel petty and points him toward running hard on Saturday. Other strong picks: Wednesday's conversation (planting the unresolved feeling); Thursday's bad leg (the low point he must move past); Saturday's race (commitment IS the change). NOT acceptable: answers that describe an episode without saying how it CHANGES Devon; answers that pick an episode and then summarize the rest of the story instead. Name the episode, name what Devon sees or does in it, and then name what that makes him willing or able to do later.
10.	**Answer:** Strong answers contrast a START detail with an END detail. Example: at the start, Devon runs the anchor the same way for two seasons and "could not think of a single sentence that would not sound like a complaint" when his role changes — at the end, he runs his new leg "as hard as he had ever run anything" and "for the first time in three days he agreed" with Ms. Kalu. The change he names should be ONE clear thing — willingness to trust, willingness to commit to a new role, ability to listen, etc. Acceptable variations as long as a specific start detail AND a specific end detail are given. NOT acceptable: "He became faster" (the text doesn't show his time changing); "He grew up" with no quoted detail; only one half of the contrast. One sentence about Devon at the start with a quote — then one sentence about Devon at the end with a quote — then say what changed.

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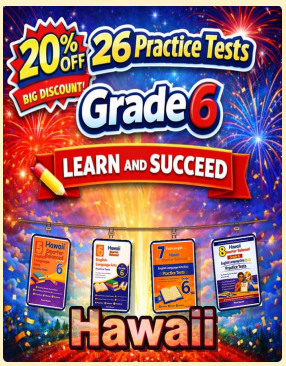

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