Reading vs. Watching: Comparing Versions

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

When the same story is read on the page and watched on a screen, each version does some things the other cannot. The reader's mind fills in pictures and feelings; the screen shows them directly — through actors, music, lighting, and editing.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Phone Call (story excerpt)

Yusuf was halfway through dinner when his mother set down her fork and said, in the voice she only used when something important was about to happen, "That was the school on the phone earlier. They want to see us tomorrow morning." Yusuf put his glass down very carefully, because if he put it down quickly his hand would shake. His sister, Layla, who was nine, kept eating as though nothing had been said, but her eyes lifted once to his and then went back to her plate.

Yusuf had known this call would come. For two weeks he had been carrying around an essay he had not written, an essay his teacher had warned him not to copy from the internet, an essay he had copied from the internet anyway. Tonight, hearing his mother's careful voice, he felt his face go warm in a way that probably did not show on the outside but that he could feel along the bridge of his nose. "Okay," he said. He pushed his rice around on the plate. "What time?"

His mother did not answer right away. She looked at him for a long moment — not angry, not yet — and Yusuf could not tell what that look was made of. He had imagined this conversation in his head so many times that the imagined version felt more familiar than the real one. In the imagined version, his mother yelled. In the real version, she said, "Eight-thirty. We will leave the house at eight," and then she picked up her fork again. Layla, still nine, kicked Yusuf gently under the table — once, twice — a code the two of them had used since she was five. It meant: I'm with you.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the passage to answer each question. Several questions ask you to imagine the SAME scene filmed for a movie or television.

1. If a filmmaker turned this scene into a short movie, which detail from the WRITTEN version would be HARDEST to show on screen directly?

A. the rice on Yusuf's plate

B. Yusuf's mother setting down her fork

C. the warmth Yusuf feels "along the bridge of his nose" that "probably did not show on the outside"

D. the time "Eight-thirty" that Yusuf's mother says aloud

2. Which detail would be EASIER to show on screen than to describe in prose?

A. the way the mother's voice sounds — the actual tone Yusuf calls "the voice she only used when something important was about to happen"

B. Yusuf's memory of the imagined version of the conversation

C. the fact that the essay was about something Yusuf cannot remember now

D. the warmth Yusuf feels along the bridge of his nose

3. On screen, a filmmaker might use a CLOSE-UP of Layla's face to show what?

A. the eye-contact moment when her eyes lift once to Yusuf's and then go back to her plate

B. the imagined version of the conversation that exists only in Yusuf's head

C. the warmth Yusuf feels along the bridge of his nose

D. the time on a clock at the school

4. On screen, a filmmaker would probably use SOUND (music, silence, ambient noise) to do what the prose does with its slow sentences?

A. explain that Yusuf copied his essay from the internet

B. create the TENSION of the long, careful pause between mother and son

C. tell the audience the time of day in the morning

D. show what Layla is eating for dinner

5. Which sentence BEST compares what a READER imagines vs. what a VIEWER sees about Yusuf's mother?

A. A reader sees her exact face and clothing; a viewer must imagine them.

B. A reader imagines her face, voice, and clothes from the description; a viewer sees one specific actress's choices for all of those.

C. A reader and a viewer see exactly the same picture of her.

D. A viewer never gets any information about Yusuf's mother at all.

6. Layla's gentle kicks under the table — "once, twice — a code... It meant: I'm with you" — would be challenging to film for which reason?

A. The kicks would be physically dangerous for the actress.

B. Audiences would not know what kicking under a table means without the prose's clear explanation, so the filmmaker would have to add a way to communicate the code.

C. Tables on screen are usually too small to fit two children.

D. Sound recording cannot pick up the noise of a foot.

7. Which choice describes a STRENGTH of the written version that a screen version would have to work hard to match?

A. direct access to Yusuf's inner thought that the imagined version felt more familiar than the real one

B. showing the color of the dinner plates

C. showing Layla's age, which is nine

D. showing that the school called earlier in the day

8. Read this line: "Yusuf put his glass down very carefully, because if he put it down quickly his hand would shake." In a film version, an actor could SHOW this through —

A. a long voice-over speech explaining why the character is nervous.

B. a close-up of the glass being set down slowly, with the actor's hand visibly steady on the outside but pressed too hard against the table.

C. a written caption on the screen that says: "He is nervous."

D. music suddenly becoming very loud and joyful at this exact moment.

9. Choose ONE specific moment from the passage. Describe how a film version would handle that moment differently than the written version, and explain whether the WRITTEN or the FILMED version would do that moment better — and why.

_____

_____

10. What is ONE thing a film version of this scene could ADD that the written version cannot give the reader? Describe how the filmmaker might use it and what it would do for the audience.

_____

_____

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. C	A feeling that the character himself says does NOT show on the outside is exactly the kind of inner detail prose can name and film cannot show directly. A is a physical object the camera can frame; B is a visible action; D is a line of dialogue an actor can say.
2. A	Voice on screen comes through speakers — the audience HEARS the tone directly, which prose can only describe in roundabout ways. B is an internal flashback that must be filmed with extra craft; C is a piece of information that needs voice-over or dialogue; D is internal again.
3. A	The eye-flick is a tiny, observable physical action — perfect for a close-up. B is interior and must be filmed differently (e.g., a separate shot); C is internal to Yusuf, not Layla; D is at the school the next day, not at the table.
4. B	Slow prose creates pace and tension; on screen, that same job is done by held silences, soft underscore, or a slow zoom. A is information that has to be told some other way; C is a small detail that doesn't need musical work; D is visible without sound.
5. B	Prose hands the reader a sketch the imagination fills in; film hands the viewer a single, specific person's choices. A reverses reader and viewer; C ignores the difference entirely; D contradicts the medium (films absolutely show the mother).
6. B	Prose tells the reader the meaning of the gesture; on film, the meaning must be carried by acting, framing, or a previous setup — extra work. A is over-literal; C is wrong (tables aren't the problem); D mistakes the issue (sound capture is fine; meaning is the issue).
7. A	An inner comparison between an imagined conversation and the real one lives inside a character's head — prose names it in one sentence; film usually needs voice-over, flashback, or careful acting. B, C, and D are facts the camera can show or convey easily with one shot or one line.
8. B	Show, don't tell: a close-up of the controlled hand carries the same information as the prose's "if he put it down quickly his hand would shake." A is the lazy way and breaks the scene; C is a caption that most films would not use here; D contradicts the mood (joyful music would jar).

9.	**Answer:** Strong answers name a specific moment, describe a concrete film choice (close-up, silence, score, slow pace, particular blocking, particular line delivery), and DEFEND a side. Examples: (a) The eye-flick between Yusuf and Layla works better on film, because a close-up of the briefest glance is one of the things cameras do best, and prose must SLOW it down to describe it; (b) The bridge-of-the-nose warmth works better in prose, because the line says it does not show on the outside — film cannot easily reveal a feeling no one can see. Either side is acceptable if the answer names ONE moment, ONE film technique, AND a real reason. NOT acceptable: answers that compare the two versions in general without picking a moment; answers without a clear stand. Pick a moment that is visible OR a moment that is invisible. The visible one usually favors film; the invisible one usually favors prose.
10.	**Answer:** Strong answers name a specific film element AND a specific use AND a specific effect. Examples: (a) music — a soft, low piano underscore during the long pause would let the audience FEEL the held breath without any character saying anything; (b) lighting — a warmer light on Layla's small kicks would visually mark her as Yusuf's only ally in the room; (c) a tiny pause in the actress's voice when the mother says "Eight-thirty" could carry both calm and disappointment at once, in a way the prose only describes; (d) ambient sound — the clink of forks, the hum of a fridge — could fill the silence the prose suggests. NOT acceptable: "more action" or "more characters" with no use described; answers about film elements that have nothing to do with this scene (car chases, special effects). Think of one of: music, lighting, camera shot, ambient sound, an actor's voice choice — then say what it would DO for this exact scene.

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