Comparing a Story to Its Audio, Film, or Stage Version

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

When a story moves to a film, an audio drama, or a stage, each medium does the work with its own tools. Film has camera shots, lighting, and editing. Audio has voice, music, and sound effects. Stage has live performance, blocking, and a real human in front of you. Each version can do something the others cannot.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Tryout (story excerpt, with imagined film and audio versions)

Idris arrived at the school auditorium fifteen minutes before the basketball tryout was supposed to start, because his cousin Halima had told him that being early was the only thing he could fully control. The doors were locked. He sat down on the cold tile floor with his back against the cinder-block wall and unzipped his gym bag to check, one more time, that he had both shoes. He had both shoes. He zipped the bag. A second seventh-grader sat down three feet away from him, did the exact same gym-bag check, and laughed very quietly when he caught Idris watching. "Halima told me," the second kid said. "I'm her neighbor." Idris nodded. He did not say anything. He had imagined this tryout in his head so many times that he was, frankly, tired of it before it had even begun. The tile was cold. The auditorium doors were still locked. Outside, in the parking lot, a school bus idled — the long, low rumble of an engine that did not have anywhere to go for the next forty minutes.

When the doors finally opened at 3:30, Coach Mensah did not shout. He did not blow a whistle. He stood in the doorway with a clipboard against his thigh and said, almost as though he were reading a grocery list, "Sneakers on. Sit on the baseline. We'll start with three drills." Twenty-six seventh-graders filed in. Idris's hands, which had been calm all morning, picked precisely this moment to start shaking very faintly. He sat on the baseline. He pretended, with great care, to retie a shoe that did not need retying. Halima's neighbor sat down beside him and did not look at him, which Idris registered, gratefully, as a kind of generosity.

=== IMAGINED FILM VERSION (a director's notes) === If this scene were a film, the director might open with a long, slow shot of the locked auditorium doors from Idris's eye level — a closed surface, beige paint, a brass handle that does not turn. Then a cut to Idris's hands unzipping the gym bag — close enough that the audience can see the small tremor in his fingers that the prose only hints at later. The bus idling outside could be heard but not shown, low under everything, until Coach Mensah opens the doors at 3:30. The coach's calm, almost-grocery-list line might be delivered without any music at all — silence as a choice, so the audience feels the absence of the whistle the prose explicitly mentions. The film could END the scene on a tight shot of Idris's hands picking at the laces of the shoe that does not need retying — no dialogue, no music, just the small, careful, busy hands.

=== IMAGINED AUDIO-DRAMA VERSION (a sound designer's notes) === An audio drama has no pictures, so every detail must come through sound. The scene might open with the LOW idle of the school bus in the parking lot — a long, steady rumble that establishes that we are outside a building, near a vehicle that has time on its hands. The unzipping of the gym bag could be the FIRST close, intimate sound — a sharp metal zip, then quiet — letting the listener feel how small and private Idris's pre-tryout ritual is. The locked door could be heard as a soft rattle (handle, no give). When Coach Mensah's voice arrives at 3:30, it should be calm, quiet, and slightly closer to the microphone than the bus rumble — the listener should LEAN IN to hear it, the way the seventh-graders on the baseline do. The audio drama might struggle, however, with the prose's silent moment of Idris retying a shoe that does not need retying — a visual detail that has no natural sound. The sound designer might choose a quiet, repeated, almost ambient noise of laces being adjusted, three times, and trust the listener to understand.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the story excerpt, the director's film notes, and the sound designer's audio notes to answer each question. Several questions ask you to COMPARE how each medium handles the same moment.

1. Which detail from the WRITTEN story would be HARDEST for an audio drama to handle directly?

A. the low idle of the bus engine in the parking lot

B. Coach Mensah's calm line at 3:30

C. Idris retying a shoe that does not need retying — a visual habit that has no natural sound

D. the metal zip of the gym bag being unzipped

2. Which technique would the FILM version use to do work the prose does with sentence-by-sentence pacing?

A. a long voice-over narration explaining what Idris is feeling.

B. a slow opening shot of the locked auditorium doors plus a cut to the small tremor in Idris's hands — pace through framing and editing, not through words.

C. a flashback to Idris's earlier life at a previous school.

D. subtitles printed across the screen explaining the situation.

3. Which strength of the AUDIO version is something the prose ALSO does well, but in a different way?

A. showing the exact brand of sneakers Idris is wearing.

B. letting the audience HEAR the bus idle outside as a steady low rumble — the prose describes it as "the long, low rumble of an engine that did not have anywhere to go for the next forty minutes."

C. showing the color of the auditorium walls.

D. displaying the time on a digital clock.

4. Read this line from the prose: "His hands, which had been calm all morning, picked precisely this moment to start shaking very faintly." Which medium would handle this MOST DIRECTLY?

A. audio drama, through a sharp loud sound.

B. film, through a close-up of the tremor in Idris's fingers as he unzips the gym bag.

C. a stage version, with a spotlight on a different actor entirely.

D. the prose handles it more directly than any other medium could.

5. Coach Mensah's line is described as "almost as though he were reading a grocery list." Which medium would communicate this tone MOST EFFECTIVELY?

A. film, by having Coach Mensah literally hold up a grocery list to the camera.

B. audio drama, by having the voice actor deliver the line in a calm, flat, slightly bored tone — quiet, not loud — exactly as the sound designer's notes describe.

C. the prose, by adding an exclamation mark to the line.

D. a stage version, by having Coach Mensah shout the line.

6. Which sentence BEST compares what a READER imagines vs. what a FILM VIEWER sees about Coach Mensah?

A. A reader sees Coach Mensah's exact face and uniform; a viewer must imagine them.

B. A reader builds Coach Mensah from the description (clipboard against his thigh, no whistle, grocery-list line); a viewer sees one specific actor's choices for the same details.

C. Both readers and viewers see exactly the same picture of him.

D. A film viewer never gets any information about Coach Mensah at all.

7. What is one thing the FILM version would do that the AUDIO version cannot?

A. use a tight shot of Idris's hands picking at laces that do not need retying — a silent visual that audio struggles with.

B. play the low rumble of a school bus engine.

C. deliver Coach Mensah's line in a calm, flat voice.

D. use the sound of a metal zipper unzipping a gym bag.

8. Which sentence BEST describes a key DIFFERENCE between the FILM version and the AUDIO version of the SAME moment when Coach Mensah opens the doors?

A. The film version would use silence as a deliberate choice — no music, no whistle — while the audio version would use Coach Mensah's voice as the first close sound and ask listeners to LEAN IN to hear it.

B. The film version would use loud action music with a whistle, while the audio version would have no sound at all.

C. Both versions would handle the moment in exactly the same way.

D. Neither version would show or describe Coach Mensah opening the doors.

9. Choose ONE specific moment from the prose. Describe how the FILM version and the AUDIO version would each handle that moment differently. Then say which medium — prose, film, or audio — does that moment best, and explain why.

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10. What is ONE specific technique unique to FILM (camera shot, lighting, editing, on-screen text) AND ONE specific technique unique to AUDIO (voice, music, ambient sound, silence) that you would use to communicate Idris's nerves to a viewer or listener? Explain how each technique would do the job.

_____

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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 silent visual habit is exactly what audio cannot show directly — sound designer's notes name this problem. A, B, and D are all sounds an audio drama records easily.
2. B	Slow shot + close-up = the visual version of slow prose. A is the lazy way and breaks the scene's quiet; C invents a flashback; D inserts text the film does not need.
3. B	Both prose and audio handle the idling bus — prose paints it; audio simply plays it. A, C, and D are visual details audio cannot do directly.
4. B	A faint tremor is a tiny visible thing — exactly what a close-up was made for. A is wrong (a sharp sound contradicts "very faintly"); C invents a different actor; D ignores what the camera does best.
5. B	Voice is exactly what audio drama does best, and a flat, calm delivery PROVES the grocery-list comparison without any visual. A reads the simile too literally; C contradicts "grocery list" with a shout-mark; D contradicts the calm description.
6. B	Prose hands the reader a sketch the imagination fills in; film hands the viewer a single, specific person. A reverses reader and viewer; C ignores the difference; D contradicts the film notes.
7. A	The silent retying is the very moment the sound designer's notes admit will be hard in audio. B, C, and D are all sounds audio handles easily.
8. A	Film uses silence; audio uses a calm voice close to the mic — different tools, same job. B reverses the choices; C ignores the differences; D contradicts both versions.
9.	**Answer:** Strong answers name ONE moment, describe a concrete FILM choice AND a concrete AUDIO choice, and DEFEND one medium. Examples: (a) the gym-bag zipper — film uses a tight close-up of Idris's fingers, audio uses a sharp metal-zip sound; audio probably wins here because the SOUND of a zipper is intimate in a way a visual close-up makes you watch from outside; (b) the locked auditorium doors — film uses a long static shot of the closed door, audio uses a soft rattle of a handle without a give; film probably wins because the SIGHT of a closed door visually carries the waiting; (c) Idris retying a shoe that does not need retying — prose probably wins because the meaning of the action (he is not really retying — he is hiding) lives in the writer's exact words. Any clear choice with a real reason earns full credit. NOT acceptable: answers without a specific moment; answers that pick a medium without explaining why; answers that ignore one of the three media. Pick one moment. Then ask: is it a SIGHT, a SOUND, or an inner MEANING? Each kind has a medium that does it best.

10.	**Answer:** Strong answers name a specific FILM technique AND a specific AUDIO technique AND say what each does. Examples: FILM — a tight close-up of his fingers on the zipper, lingering long enough that the audience starts to count the seconds, makes the tremor visible without dialogue; AUDIO — a low, steady underscore (almost ambient) below the bus rumble, with the gym-bag zipper deliberately louder than it should be, makes the listener's attention shrink to the small private ritual the way Idris's attention does. Other strong options: FILM — low warm lighting and a quiet hand-held camera that drifts very slightly to suggest unsteadiness; AUDIO — a complete silence right before Coach Mensah speaks, so the listener feels Idris's held breath. NOT acceptable: techniques that do not exist in the medium named (e.g., "voice" listed under film); only one technique; vague answers like "add some music." One technique per medium. Then say what each one does to the audience — see it, hear it, feel it.

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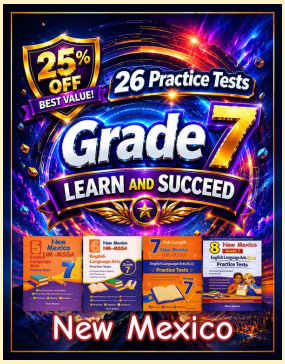

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