

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Word Choice & Meaning

Read the short story and answer each question.



The Spotlight Switch

Zara loved being the center of attention. Whether it was school plays, talent shows, or class presentations—if there was a spotlight, she wanted to stand in it.

So when her teacher announced the school was holding a debate competition, Zara's hand shot up before anyone else's. "I want to go first!"

But when the teams were posted, she wasn't a speaker—she was assigned to help write the opening speech.

"What? That's not fair!" she groaned to her best friend, Mila. "I'm the best speaker in class!"

Mila shrugged. "Maybe the teacher thought you'd be a great writer."

Zara didn't care. She felt invisible. While others practiced their lines, she stayed quiet and doodled in the margins of her notebook.

But then she overheard the team reading her draft aloud. "Wow," someone whispered. "Zara wrote this? It sounds amazing."

On debate day, the speech she wrote opened the entire competition. People clapped. The judges smiled. One teacher even leaned over and whispered to another, "That's some strong writing."

Zara didn't win a trophy. She didn't say a single word into the microphone. But she felt proud in a different way—as if the spotlight had grown large enough to reach even the sides of the stage.



Name: _____

The Campfire Circle

1. Why is Zara upset when she sees the debate team list?

- A. She doesn't want to do extra homework
- B. She is nervous about speaking
- C. She wasn't chosen to be a speaker
- D. Her best friend is on the other team

2. What helps Zara change her point of view about writing the speech?

- A. Mila tells her to stop complaining
- B. The speakers mess up, and she takes over
- C. She hears others compliment her writing
- D. She gets to write the closing speech instead

3. Fill in the blank:

Zara felt proud, even though she didn't stand in the _____.

4. How is Zara's point of view at the beginning different from her point of view at the end? What caused the change?

5. Would you have felt the same way as Zara about being left out of the spotlight? Why or why not?



Parent and Teacher Guide

Guide Reading Level: P

Lexile Level: 645L-795L

Grade Level: 3rd Grade, End of the Year

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Introducing the Text

"In this story, Zara starts with one point of view—wanting to be seen and heard—but she learns something new about herself. As we read, we'll think about how her view changes and compare it to how we might feel in the same situation."

Vocabulary: debate, spotlight, invisible, proud, center

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever wanted to be in charge or take the lead?
 2. How do you feel when you're part of something but not in the main role?
 3. What do you think is the difference between being seen and being appreciated?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. What are Zara's feelings when she's not chosen to speak?
 2. How does hearing others read her words affect her?
 3. What shows us that Zara's point of view is shifting?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What is your point of view on Zara's role in the debate?
 2. Can someone be important even if they aren't in the spotlight?
 3. Why is it valuable to compare your point of view with a character's?
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Activity Idea

Have students create a **"Spotlight Reflection Journal Page."** On one side, they write how Zara felt before and after the story. On the other side, they write how *they* would feel in Zara's situation and explain why. Encourage students to share and discuss how seeing another point of view can change the way we value different roles.

