# Vocabulary Skill Check

## Grade 9 · Figurative language · Try 1

Name or code _____ Date _____

Read each passage. Circle the letter that gives the best meaning in that passage.

**Passage 1**

The exhibition label was already printed when my cousin noticed the photograph’s date. I rubbed the dried glue from my fingertips and leaned over his shoulder.

“This building was not finished then,” he said, pointing to the window behind the people. The contradiction could **undermine** the story we had attached to the picture. We had treated the date as certain because it appeared in an old family album. We set the printed label aside until its date could be checked. The contradiction did not tell us exactly which part was mistaken, but we could no longer present the whole label as established fact.

My cousin held the photograph while I lifted one corner of the label from its backing. I set it aside without tearing it and wrote a question mark beside the date in our notes.

**1. As used in this passage, what does “undermine” most nearly mean?**

Circle ONE letter.

**A** weaken the basis for trusting an existing account

**B** replace a proposal with a more detailed version

**C** challenge a decision without affecting its support

**D** make an argument easier for readers to follow

**Passage 2**

The photograph slipped from the envelope and landed beside my plate. I recognized the empty shop window before noticing my own reflection in its glass.

“Why should it stay empty?” my brother asked. We wanted a place to display local students' work, and the owner had already invited suggestions.

That question turned our unfinished talk into definite action. We wrote to the owner, measured the window and asked the art club what it could contribute. The possibilities had existed before the photograph arrived.

His question became the **catalyst** for a plan we had mentioned for months without pursuing. My brother turned the envelope over and began sketching the window’s outline. I moved my plate aside so he could draw the display shelves without running out of space.

**2. In this passage, a catalyst is best understood as—**

Circle ONE letter.

**A** a requirement that makes all disagreement disappear

**B** a trigger for action that was already possible

**C** a distraction that prevents an existing concern from being discussed

**D** a final result produced after every decision is complete

**Passage 3**

The letters arrived tied with a shoelace rather than a ribbon. I loosened the knot carefully because my grandfather had kept every envelope.

“Read whichever one catches your eye,” he said. They described moves, jobs and ordinary meals across several decades. I began to recognize a **thread** beneath those changing subjects.

Each letter returned to the difficulty of leaving people behind. Sometimes it appeared as a missed train; elsewhere, it was an extra plate set out for someone who could not come. The repeated concern connected events that otherwise seemed far apart.

Grandfather handed me another envelope, its stamp almost rubbed smooth. I placed it beside the letter about the empty chair and turned them both so that he could read across my shoulder.

**3. As used in this passage, what does “thread” most nearly mean?**

Circle ONE letter.

**A** a single detail that replaces the rest of an account

**B** a piece of information accidentally repeated without purpose

**C** a material used to fasten the pages of a collection

**D** a continuing concern linking different experiences

**Passage 4**

The cupboard door would not close around our half-finished props. I pushed a cardboard tower inward while my brother carried in another box from his repair club.

“You have the whole shelf again,” he said. Even a request for string now sounded like an accusation about who had left the room untidy.

Conflicting expectations made ordinary cooperation increasingly strained. We both needed a place for unfinished work, but we had never agreed on what sharing the cupboard actually required.

I pulled the tower back out and set it on the floor. Our **friction** had grown through weeks of small disputes about a space neither club could use alone. My brother fetched a tape measure, and we began marking the shelves while the box he had brought remained open between us.

**4. Which phrase best replaces “friction” without changing the meaning?**

Circle ONE letter.

**A** a settled agreement that removes competing interests

**B** lively discussion that improves cooperation without difficulty

**C** tension that makes cooperation more difficult

**D** physical resistance where two rough surfaces touch

**Passage 5**

The recording of my performance reached relatives before I had packed away the instrument. I was pleased to hear from people who had never been able to attend. “Now everyone expects the next one tonight,” my sister said. That visibility was **a double-edged sword**. It let distant family share the moment, but it also created pressure to turn every practice into something ready for an audience.

The new opportunity brought a drawback connected to its success. I wanted the contact without losing the untidy rehearsals in which I could stop, try again and sound unfinished. I put the phone inside its case and opened the music stand. Before beginning, I sent one message promising a recording after the next concert, then left the screen dark beside the unopened instrument bag.

**5. As used in this passage, what does “a double-edged sword” most nearly mean?**

Circle ONE letter.

**A** an advantage that also brings a significant drawback

**B** a solution that permanently removes the need for caution

**C** a tool whose two parts solve unrelated problems

**D** a choice that is harmful and has no possible benefit

**Passage 6**

My sister's medal hung beside the family calendar, its ribbon catching whenever the door opened. I practiced in the next room and tried not to watch people stop beside it. I felt I was **in the shadow of** my sister's athletic success, even though we were trying to do completely different things.

Her well-known achievements drew attention away from my quieter work. The feeling did not make her success wrong, and it did not tell me what my own work was worth. It made sharing the room after dinner more complicated.

"Play the piece you chose," my teacher said when I told her how rarely anyone asked about my music.

I moved the music stand nearer the doorway and began without waiting for an invitation. When my sister sat on the floor to listen, the medal swung once against the wall behind her.

**6. Which meaning of "in the shadow of" best fits this passage?**

Circle ONE letter.

**A** physically hidden from light by a nearby structure

**B** made impossible by the absence of any useful support

**C** receiving less notice than someone better known

**D** protected from criticism by sharing another person's success

Teacher use: ____ / 6