

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Comprehension Quiz

Please read the following excerpt from Genevieve Valentine’s “The Segment” from *After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia*.

1	<p>When Mason showed me the script sides for the child soldier, I jumped on it.</p> <p>“Think about this,” he said. “The segment could be huge. Is that how you want to make your career?”</p> <p>He talked a big game, but this segment was special. He had to know it, too; I was the only one at our agency he’d even talked to about it.</p> <p>I said, “I’ll take my chances.”</p> <p>“All right,” he said. He looked serious, but I was pretty sure he was just full of it.</p> <p>The best gig I’d had so far was the front half of a black bear for a nature documentary. It was on cable. I’m not complaining—you have to pay your way at the agency, and rent be not proud—but I needed to earn some more, soon, and “bear half ” didn’t set your career on fire.</p> <p>Face time was an upgrade. And this wasn’t some bit part as a muddy orphan in an establishing shot. This was the big time.</p> <p>This was the evening news.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">***</p>
2	<p>That night I walked under our painted motto (Let Those Who Would Be Fooled, Be Fooled) into the dining hall, packed with kids from the Lowers that the agency hired out as sympathetic faces on news segments for the Uppers to go watch when they were feeling generous.</p> <p>I sat down, grinning, next to Bree. “I’m in the audition pool for a soldier.”</p> <p>She barely looked up from her vegetable mash. “Oh? Congratulations.”</p> <p>“Yeah,” I said. “It’s big. Investor backing for the cause, too, so the pay is pretty solid.”</p> <p>“Wonderful,” she said. “I was beginning to worry you’d aged out of your best work. It’s nice they’re skewing older on something.”</p> <p>I was sixteen. Bree was nineteen, and kind of a bitch.</p> <p>“What’s the story?”</p> <p>“My brother is missing,” I said, “and he was the last thing I had left of home. Now I’m fighting the people who took him since I’m dead inside anyway, grenades exploding on us any moment, blah, blah, blah. They wanted someone who can handle a gun, not for crying or anything.”</p> <p>Bree’s fork wasn’t moving anymore. “Is this for some newspaper?”</p> <p>I grinned. “The evening news.”</p> <p>Now she was looking up, her head angled by instinct to catch the best light on her face.</p> <p>“What?”</p> <p>“Yup.” I shrugged like it was nothing. “I was handpicked. If the segment breaks big, they’ll probably have to retire me.”</p> <p>Bree looked stunned. After a second, she recovered and said, “Dream big.”</p> <p>“I’m going to get it,” I said.</p> <p>She smiled. “I’m sure,” she said. “And if that doesn’t pan out, there’s always a place for you</p>

on Naturewise.”

She was acting like I’d been the back half of the bear.

I stood. “I’m going to rehearse.”

“Break a leg,” said Bree, like she meant it.

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When I was still a kid, Bree had gotten a gig as a grieving bride whose husband was killed by government troops on his way up the stairs of the church.

(She was still in the dorms with me, then; she wouldn’t be a teacher until after that segment.)

It was supposed to be a small part, a background tableau in the middle of a bigger story, but Bree wasn’t a person who played small parts.

In the on-scene segment with the news man in front, she had clutched her veil in her fists as she wept over the body of the guy who’d been her husband.

He was from some other agency. I hadn’t seen him since—she’d kept him in the spotlight too long, and his face was too famous after that. She’d taken his career down. Bree played for keeps.

In the grainy newspaper shots (meant to have been taken by a wedding guest), Bree had cradled his head in her lap and lowered her mouth to his mouth, their lips almost touching but not quite.

“You’re not supposed to kiss before marriage in that country,” Bree told me the night before filming, when everyone else was asleep.

“There’s nowhere to go with that,” I said.

Bree said, “Watch me.”

At the time I hated that we shared a dorm. Our beds were pressed up against the walls, separated except for her voice, and I was trapped listening to her; but there was no question that the advice had done me good.)

1. In section 1 of “The Segment,” what is happening?

- a) Mason found the script sides for the role of a child soldier on the news.
- b) The main character once played the front half of a bear in a nature show.
- c) The main character applies for a job as a child soldier in the evening news.
- d) A role as a child soldier on the evening news becomes available.

2. What does the last line of section 1 tell you about the story?

- a) The child soldier part is a role for the evening news.
- b) This new role is better than playing half of a bear.
- c) Being on the evening news is better than being on cable.
- d) News clips are no longer real and are made up of actors.

3. In section 2, it says that when Bree looked up, “her head angled by instinct to catch the best light on her face.” What does that tell us about her?

- a) Bree’s face is angled so it’s lit up.
- b) Bree is a naturally gifted actor.
- c) Bree looks her best in the light.

4. What is the best summary of the conversation that Bree and the narrator have in section 2?

- a) The child soldier’s backstory involves a missing brother.
- b) Bree isn’t thrilled about the narrator’s possible new role.
- c) Bree sarcastically jokes about the narrator’s previous work.
- d) A big investor is backing the segment the narrator might act in.

5. What does the main character primarily describe in section 3?

- a) How Bree got an acting job in a piece.
- b) Bree’s big acting role as a grieving wife.
- c) A news story about war, death, and marriage.
- d) Why the narrator and Bree aren’t close.

6. Judging from sections 2 and 3, the best way to summarize Bree’s relationship with the narrator would be:

- a) They used to share a dorm, but now that Bree is a teacher, they don’t.
- b) Although they’re now like rivals, the narrator has learned a lot from Bree.
- c) Because Bree plays for keeps, the narrator doesn’t like her.
- d) Mason wants the narrator to be as successful as Bree has been.

7. The author describes Bree as “catch[ing] the best light [by instinct],” “[not] a person who played small parts,” and someone who “played for keeps.” What word and definition best describes her, based on the previous quotations?

- a) Possessive (demanding total control and attention)
- b) Prominent (important, famous, or noticeable)
- c) Gifted (having exceptional talent or natural ability)
- d) Ambitious (showing determination and desire to succeed)

8. In the space below, describe (predict) what you think the rest of the story is about. You can use the story’s title (“The Segment”) and the title of the collection (*After: Nineteen Stories of Apocalypse and Dystopia*) to help.