

**EXTENDED READING
COMPREHENSION**

The One

Read the story, and then answer the questions that follow.

- 1 Jess took another deep breath and completed the count in his head...*ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one HUNDRED*. With relaxed shoulders and loose arms, he bounced lightly on his toes for twenty counts, transferring his weight from left to right. He swung his arms forward in big circles exactly twenty-five times and then swung his arms in reverse exactly twenty-five times. In an effort to calm his nerves and help himself focus before he stepped on stage in front of the live audience, Jess continued his pre-performance ritual, mentally running through the sequence of turns and taps he'd soon be performing. But one thought kept creeping into the front of his mind, breaking his tried-and-true routine—I really, really want to be "The One."
- 2 Every year, the Young Musical Theater Performers Association hosted recruiting auditions in twelve regions throughout the state. Young performers, ages 12–18, got the chance to perform in front of a live audience and compete for one highly coveted, tuition-free spot in the YMTPA summer training camp. The judges would choose "The One" from each region. Jess had been an audience member every year since he was eight years old, dreaming of someday being crowned "The One." This was his chance.
- 3 Jess was slated to perform last. He'd watched most of the other performers on a screen backstage. They were all impressive, but he knew his main rival for the top spot was Tiana Rae, who was on right before him. Tiana Rae was a real triple threat: she could sing, she could dance, and she was one of the best actors in the community theater where they'd both played various roles over the years. Waiting in the wings for his turn, Jess watched Tiana Rae perform. *Wow!* Jess thought as Tiana Rae belted out her big finish. *That was perfect!* The audience went wild with tremendous applause and cheering; even Jess applauded from offstage. She'd nailed it!
- 4 As Tiana Rae jogged off stage past Jess, the two flashed each other the double thumbs-up. Then Jess hurried onto the stage behind the closed curtain, found his spot on the floor, and got into position. A hush fell over the audience as the heavy velvet curtain rose to reveal Jess standing center stage, a frozen statue in a circle of light. The sequins on the lapels of his vivid blue suit flashed and twinkled, and Jess smiled confidently at the unseen audience beyond the radiant glow of the spotlight. Finally, the music soared through the speakers, and Jess began his performance. And what a performance it was! He'd spent so much time rehearsing and perfecting his act that he was able to just be carried along in the moment, bringing the audience along for the ride. He sang; he tapped; he played to the crowd; and he finished with a perfectly executed, full-throttle aerial cartwheel—his signature move. The audience roared its approval!



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Continue reading.

5 As Jess bowed and left the stage, he was thrilled that the crowd had loved his performance... but what about the judges? He and the other performers milled about backstage, hugging and congratulating each other, while the judges deliberated. Ten minutes passed, and then twenty. *What's taking them so long?* Jess wondered. Finally, they got the signal from the stage manager. It was time. The performers were called back to the stage, one by one, where they lined up, all holding hands to take a group bow. The emcee thanked the performers, the judges, and the stage crew before finally opening the envelope he'd been handed. Jess held his breath as the emcee announced, "This year, 'The One' performer from Region 8 will be..." *(drum roll)* "...Tiana Rae!"

6 Everything was a bit of a blur after that. Jess felt so many emotions as he congratulated Tiana Rae over the applause and music. Of course, he was **crestfallen**, but he was thrilled for Tiana Rae, too. She'd really worked hard and put on a fabulous show. As the audience filed out of the auditorium, he descended the steps from the stage to find his family and friends. They all made a big deal about how amazing his performance was and how proud they were of him. And Jess appreciated their compliments, but *still*...he hadn't won. He eventually made his way back to the dressing room, where he changed out of his costume and packed it into his backpack. Jess was starting to feel the disappointment a little more keenly now that things had settled down.

7 In the lobby outside of the auditorium, Jess made his way toward the exit, so lost in his own thoughts that he barely heard the hum of people all around him. But then, an excited voice cut through the indistinct chatter: "Mom, look! He's the one!" Jess turned to correct her...he wasn't "The One." But the girl continued, "You're the one who did that amazing aerial. I loved your whole performance! Will you sign my program?" As Jess thanked her and smiled for a photo, a group of admirers formed around him. They all wanted him to sign their programs!

8 Amongst the crowd around him, Jess noticed one of the judges. *What's he doing here?* Jess wondered. Then the judge handed Jess a card. "There was only one spot for the summer camp," he said, "but we have some other opportunities on the horizon, and you're a real talent! I'll give you a call if that's all right." Jess nodded, speechless. He looked down at the card. It read, "ARE YOU THE ONE?" As he pocketed the card, Jess thought that just maybe, he was.



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Answer the questions about “The One.”

- 1. What is the purpose of the pre-performance ritual that Jess completes in paragraph 1?
 - A. to calm his nerves and help him focus
 - B. to warm up his muscles before performing
 - C. to intimidate the other competitors
 - D. to ensure good luck during his performance

- 2a. What is Jess’s driving motivation in the story?
 - A. He craves fame and fortune.
 - B. He wants to finally beat his nemesis, Tiana Rae.
 - C. He wants to be successful in musical theater.
 - D. He wants to impress his family in the audience.

2b. How does Jess think he can achieve his goal?

3. Based on paragraph 3, what is a “triple threat” in the context of musical theater?

- 4. Which phrase best describes the relationship between Jess and Tiana Rae?
 - A. fierce opponents C. best friends
 - B. friendly competitors D. complete strangers

5. List two pieces of evidence from the text that support your answer to question 4.

- 1. _____

- 2. _____

6. In paragraph 5, Jess wonders what is taking the judges so long to decide who is “The One.” Given what you know about how the story ends, why were the judges likely taking so long?

7a. What does the word “crestfallen” mean as it is used in paragraph 6?

7b. What clues from the text helped you understand the meaning of “crestfallen”?

- 8. What is the central theme of this passage?
 - A. If you put in the work, you will always reach your goals.
 - B. Mistakes can teach important lessons.
 - C. Working together is always better than working alone.
 - D. Success can come in different forms.

9. How do paragraphs 7 and 8 contribute to the development of the theme?

10. What are three words or phrases that could be used to describe Jess based on his actions in the story? Cite text evidence to support your answers.

WORD/PHRASE	TEXT EVIDENCE