

EXTENDED READING COMPREHENSION:

THINK FAST!

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

- 1 *Knock-knock-knock* “Hello?” Norah called timidly through her cousin Anita’s bedroom door. No answer. *There’s no way she forgot Mom and I were moving in today, right?* she thought. She counted to ten before she tried again. “Anita? It’s me, Norah!” she called, cringing at the fake cheerful tone of her voice.
- 2 Norah had only met her cousin once a couple of years ago when Anita and Aunt Sonam had flown to California to visit. Mom had hoped that Norah and Anita would be friends—they were the same age, after all. But all Anita wanted to talk about was soccer, which was practically a foreign language to Norah. Secretly, Norah had felt relieved when the visit was over.
- 3 Now, she was standing in her aunt’s tiny apartment in New York City, and there was still no answer from cousin Anita. Norah fumbled with the giant gray suitcase that held all of the clothes she had been able to bring with her. She knocked again, a little louder this time. “Hello?” she called.
- 4 Finally, Anita opened the door, tugging at the pair of purple headphones around her neck. “Oh, hey! Sorry,” she said, “I was listening to music and didn’t hear you.” But instead of inviting Norah in, Anita frowned at Norah’s massive suitcase. “Oh boy, that definitely won’t fit under the new bed. Is that all your stuff?”
- 5 “Um, pretty much,” Norah said, shifting to show Anita her backpack. “My art supplies are in here.”
- 6 “Oh, okay,” Anita replied. But she was still blocking the door. Behind her, Norah could see a blue beanbag chair crowded next to a bunk bed. In her old room in California, she’d had a double bed all to herself, and her original artwork had adorned all the walls. Anita’s walls, on the other hand, were covered with posters of the U.S. women’s soccer team. Norah didn’t see any free space to hang anything else.
- 7 “C-can I come in?” Norah felt a flush creep up her neck and face, but she tried to smile.
- 8 “Sure,” Anita said. The corners of her mouth lifted like she might smile too, but she barely moved to let Norah enter the room.
- 9 “Thanks,” Norah said, squeezing by her cousin to wheel her elephant of a suitcase into the room. Mom had told her to unpack and get settled while she and Aunt Sonam ran errands. But with only one dresser and one closet, she wasn’t sure where she’d put her things.
- 10 “I guess I’ll...just put my stuff against this wall for now,” Norah said doubtfully.
- 11 Anita shrugged and started tossing her soccer ball up and down. “So how long do you think you’ll be here?”
- 12 “I don’t know,” Norah replied, trying not to sound disappointed. “My mom needs to find a job before we can start looking for our own apartment.”

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13 Anita effortlessly bounced the soccer ball from her foot to her knee and back again. “Do you think you’ll go back to California?”

14 Great, she wants to be rid of me already. Norah shook her head. “We had to sell our house. And anyway, Mom really wants to live in New York City. It might not be so bad, though. I didn’t realize there were so many art galleries and museums here. And there are so many cool murals everywhere. The city is like one big art exhibit!”

15 “Ugh.” Anita scrunched up her nose like she smelled something rotten and continued to bounce her ball. “Whenever my school has a field trip to a museum, all I want to do is take a nap.” Her foot kicked the ball at an odd angle, and it accidentally flew toward Norah. “Whoops!” Anita called. “Think fast!”

16 But Norah was still taking in her surroundings, so the ball caught her off guard and bounced off her shoulder. Momentarily stunned, she knelt to unzip her backpack, pretending it didn’t bother her. “Well, I guess I’m kind of an art nerd,” she said. Unsure of what else to do, Norah took out her sketchbook and colored pencils and sat down on the faded rug, settling her back against her suitcase. Just holding her sketchbook in her hands made her feel more at ease.

17 Even so, the conversation stalled and the awkwardness grew worse. The only sound was the soft scratching of Norah’s pencil as she



sketched aimlessly. Anita went back to bouncing her soccer ball from her foot to her knee.

18 *Is this what my life will be like from now on?* wondered Norah.

19 Looking around the bedroom for something, anything, to distract herself, it suddenly dawned on her: she should draw Anita.

20 Quickly turning to a blank page, Norah broadly outlined the shape of her cousin bouncing the soccer ball. Anita’s attention was focused on the ball, so Norah was able to **inconspicuously** study her movements. Her spirits rose with each new line she drew. It was true that Norah didn’t enjoy playing sports herself, but she was really enjoying the challenge of trying to sketch her cousin in action!

21 After a while, Norah paused to survey her work. Although it was her first attempt at something like this, she was pleased with the way she’d captured the energy of Anita’s movements. Even the soccer ball looked like it was in motion.

22 As she was examining her sketch, Norah didn’t notice that the soccer ball was no longer bouncing up and down. She glanced up to see Anita curiously eyeing her sketch.

23 “Oh, sorry! I tend to draw when I’m nervous,” Norah explained. “It’s nothing special. I just thought you looked cool practicing.” Norah shrugged and turned the sketchbook toward her cousin.

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- 24 Anita raised an eyebrow as she tucked the soccer ball under her arm and silently took the sketchbook from Norah. As Anita studied the drawing, Norah resisted the urge to grab the sketchbook and hide. *Why did I show her?* Norah thought. *She's going to think it's totally weird!*
- 25 "Huh," Anita said. She squinted at the drawing. Her face was unreadable.
- 26 "Like I said, it's nothing special," Norah said, reaching for the book.
- 27 "No," Anita replied, "I think it's awesome! Can I have it?" Before Norah could respond, Anita had ripped Norah's drawing out of the sketchbook.
- 28 "Think fast!" Anita said, tossing the sketchbook back to Norah.
- 29 This time, Norah was ready, and she caught Anita's throw. As Norah hugged her sketchbook close, Anita **rummaged** through a drawer.
- 30 "I'm not really into art galleries and stuff," Anita said, fiddling with a tape dispenser she'd pulled from amidst the jumble of things in the dresser drawer. "But this drawing should definitely be on display here...in our room."
- 31 "Our room?" Norah repeated.
- 32 Anita taped Norah's drawing over one of her posters. "If you're moving in, we need to make a few changes around here, roomie."
- 33 Suddenly a weight lifted from Norah's shoulders, and a real smile crept across her face. She picked up Anita's soccer ball and tossed it toward her new roommate. "Think fast!"

Answer the following questions about "Think Fast!"

1. **Part A:** Which statement best captures the theme of the story?

- A. It is better to stay where you are than to leave home.
- B. Keeping an open mind about someone can bring positive results.
- C. Family is more important than anything else.
- D. Don't be afraid to stand up to bullies.

Part B: Describe how this theme is developed throughout the story.

2. How does the flashback in paragraph 2 help the reader understand more about the characters?

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Answer the following questions about “Think Fast!”

3. Part A: Which **three** adjectives below best describe Norah’s character based on what she says and does in the story?

adaptable athletic artistic charming outgoing timid wise

Part B: Give an example from the story that supports each of the adjectives you chose above.

Adjective	Example from the text

4. Part A: For most of the story, how does Anita feel about having her cousin Norah move in? Cite specific text evidence to support your answer.

Part B: What causes Anita’s feelings to change?

5. What is the meaning of **inconspicuously** as it is used in paragraph 20?

A. obviously B. easily C. secretly D. confidently

6. What is the meaning of **rummaged** as it is used in paragraph 29?

A. searched messily B. looked delicately C. hunted silently D. peered anxiously

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Keep going! Answer the following questions about “Think Fast!”

7. Complete the chart below to compare and contrast Norah and Anita based on evidence from the story.

	Norah	Anita	Both
Personality			
Interests			
Thoughts and Feelings			

8. In your own words, write a brief summary of the story.
