

Quiz A: RL.7.3

Read the passage. Then answer the question.

A New Normal

- 1 “Well, I’ve always wanted a suburban home,” Mama said, pointing to our car, a Chevrolet Suburban. It wasn’t a very funny joke, but I managed to choke out a laugh. I figured it might at least make my brothers feel better, if not me.
- 2 We all knew the eviction was imminent—Mama had shown me letters from the landlady filled with threatening words and legalese. Later, we overheard conversations between my stepdad and Mama: “Any day now, Anthony, we’re going to be forced into the street.”
- 3 Anthony just sat on the sofa, scratching Sophocles, our Labrador retriever, and pleading, “Veronica, what more do you want me to do?”
- 4 Of course, that was one of the rare times lately he’d been home; most days he stayed on the docks until well after dark, asking around for work. He’d been a mariculture engineer until the company he worked for filed for bankruptcy. Now he worked on the kinds of boats he used to manage, but because he lacked a captain’s license, there weren’t many jobs available that paid well. While he was out, Mama paced the apartment, stuffing things in boxes and then taking them out, talking to us and herself, crying. Sometimes she deposited herself at the table and did calculations to figure out how much money Anthony would bring home. And it always turned out to be less than her estimates.
- 5 When she finally drove Sophocles to the SPCA, Mama didn’t let Alexander come with her because he was wailing so much. Because I’m the responsible one, of course, I was left in charge of him at home. I just closed the door to our bedroom and let him cry himself to sleep. I was devastated to lose Sophocles, but what choice did we have? What little money we had was needed to feed us. Over the next few weeks, books started to disappear, followed by the television, and then one day after school, our key didn’t open the lock, and our remaining, paltry possessions were on the pavement.
- 6 We packed up the Suburban and Mama drove down to the docks, but Anthony was out on a run, so we sat and considered our situation in silence. My mind kept spinning in all directions, and I think that was true for us all.
- 7 Alexander snuggled into me and squeezed his eyes shut. Poor guy, I thought, none of us deserve this, but especially not him. He doesn’t deserve to be homeless. And then it hit me—that was the word for this: homeless. I had read about homeless people, and the whole idea was so foreign. Homelessness is what happened to other people, people who didn’t work hard or try to get jobs, what happened to derelicts and drug users, but not to us. I realized then how wrong I’d been. Normal, everyday people just like me and Alexander, like Mama and Anthony, can be homeless. They can’t pay their bills and earn enough money to feed themselves, so they have to choose between the two. With four children to care for, of course our parents chose food. Me being the only girl, I would have preferred a bathroom and some privacy from my brothers, even if it meant going hungry sometimes.

