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Weekly Test Lesson 20

Read the text. Then answer the questions.

Small Potatoes

Even in the best of times, earning a living from the soil isn't easy, and last summer was especially difficult. Dry, dry, dry! From Memorial Day to Labor Day, it rained only twice, and the moisture from the rain seemed to soak into the ground and vanish without darkening the soil or cooling the air. For most people, the drought was simply an inconvenience; they couldn't water their lawns, but otherwise life went on without a ripple. But for Aunt Ramonita and me, it was a near disaster.

Aunt Ramonita and I raise vegetables on our farm out in the valley, and each Saturday we truck the produce to the green market in the city. That's how we earn our money. Things weren't looking too good last summer, though. The lettuce burned in the sun, the tomatoes died on the vine, and most of the beans never sprouted. Our normally lush farm was so dry that it even smelled different; the rich smell of fertile soil and growing plants was missing. Our hard work seemed to be producing only a harvest of dust that saturated the air, making it hard to breathe while we fought with the wilted plants that looked more dead than alive.

When it came time to dig up the potatoes, there wasn't much to dig. The biggest potatoes were merely the size of golf balls, and others were no bigger than marbles. Some were so small that they fell through the cracks in the baskets.

"Are you positive you want me to load these pitiful misfits on the truck?" I asked Aunt Ramonita on market day. "Who's going to purchase miniature potatoes?"

Aunt Ramonita sighed heavily and stared up at the cloudless sky, searching for an answer. "Yes, load them, Paco. Maybe we'll get lucky," she said, not sounding too hopeful. Her usual optimistic confidence was like the wilted plants surrounding us.

When we reached our booth, I set out the embarrassingly minuscule potatoes. We usually sell potatoes for 60 cents a pound, but that seemed a princely sum for these undersized losers. "Maybe we should sell them at a reduced price," I suggested.

Aunt Ramonita was staring at the sky again while considering her response. I could see her shaking her head and heard her sigh again. Before she could answer, we had a customer.

"Ooh, look at these cute little baby doll potatoes!" a woman carrying a tiny poodle exclaimed. "Is it a new variety? I simply must sample them!"

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“No, not a new variety,” Aunt Ramonita responded slowly, “they’re small because . . .”

“I’ll bet these bite-size babies are perfect for soups and stews,” an older man chimed in. “I’ll take two pounds.”

“What a great idea—no chopping or cutting,” added another shopper, pulling out her wallet. “What will they think of next?”

Aunt Ramonita and I exchanged glances and shrugged. All that unbridled enthusiasm for our drought-stricken potatoes gave me an idea. With a magic marker and the top of an old cardboard box, I created a large sign: *Try Our All-New “Baby Doll” Potatoes! Ideal for Soups and Stews. Only 90 Cents Per Pound!*

Shoppers are always looking for something new, and our bite-size babies were the most popular attraction at the green market that Saturday. By noon, we were completely sold out, and for the first time in weeks, Aunt Ramonita stopped sighing. Then, on the drive home, a sprinkle of rain actually splattered on the windshield.

“Hey, Baby Doll,” Aunt Ramonita trilled at me, “we were lucky after all!”

“Maybe we should dig up the rest of our ‘baby doll’ potatoes before they grow too much,” I agreed with a laugh.

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- 1 What is the main conflict?
- (A) Aunt Ramonita has developed a sighing problem.
 - (B) The customers are unpredictable at the market.
 - (C) Aunt Ramonita doesn’t like the tiny potatoes.
 - (D) The drought is affecting the crops.

- 2 Read the sentence from the text.

Her usual optimistic confidence was like the wilted plants surrounding us.

Why did the author use the underlined phrase?

- (A) to show that Aunt Ramonita is feeling uncertain about the future
- (B) to show that Aunt Ramonita expects the plants will survive
- (C) to show that the plants are growing again
- (D) to show that the plants are rotten

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- 3 Read the paragraphs from the text.

When it came time to dig up the potatoes, there wasn't much to dig. The biggest potatoes were merely the size of golf balls, and others were no bigger than marbles. Some were so small that they fell through the cracks in the baskets.

“Are you positive you want me to load these pitiful misfits on the truck?” I asked Aunt Ramonita on market day. “Who’s going to purchase miniature potatoes?”

What do these paragraphs show about Paco?

- (A) Paco is lazy.
- (B) Paco does not enjoy his work.
- (C) Paco does not want to leave the farm.
- (D) Paco is realistic about the farm’s crops.

- 4 Mark the boxes to show whether each statement is a problem, a detail, or a solution.

	Problem	Detail	Solution
Aunt Ramonita decides to take the tiny potatoes to the market even though they are so small.			
People at the market think the little potatoes are cute.			
There has not been enough rain, so the potatoes are very small.			
Paco decides to market the tiny potatoes as “baby doll” potatoes.			

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5 This question has two parts. First, answer part A. Then, answer part B.

Part A

What is the theme of the text?

- (A) You should look for the good in every situation.
- (B) Growing crops can be challenging.
- (C) Family should stick together.
- (D) Nature is unreliable.

Part B

Which detail supports the answer to part A?

- (A) The drought lasts all summer.
- (B) The potatoes that grow are very small.
- (C) Paco finds a way to sell the small potatoes.
- (D) Paco and Aunt Ramonita go to the green market together.

6 What do Aunt Ramonita’s words and actions reveal about her character? How do they change throughout the text? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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Writing

- 7 Which sentence has a misspelled word?
- (A) The ice cream truck offered vanilla cones.
 - (B) I lounged on the hammock and napped.
 - (C) My aunt served salsa with lunch.
 - (D) We had a picnic on the pattio.
- 8 Which sentence is written incorrectly?
- (A) *Little Women* is another popular book that was made into a movie.
 - (B) The class enjoyed the short story “The Prince and the Pauper.”
 - (C) **Jane Eyre** was a book long before it was a movie.
 - (D) Have you read the poem “Casey at the Bat”?
- 9 Which sentence is written incorrectly?
- (A) My brother read the novel “Wind in the Willows” by Kenneth Grahame.
 - (B) The first short story I read was “The Road to Dune” by Frank Herbert.
 - (C) The band played “Let’s Dance!” at the concert last night.
 - (D) The play *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder is my favorite.
- 10 Read the paragraph. Underline the **two** phrases that are written incorrectly.

Many movies and TV shows are based on books. For example, the Harry Potter character was introduced to many children in the United States in the novel *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* by J. K. Rowling. Many movies have been made about Tarzan, a character created by Edgar Rice Burroughs in the book *Tarzan of the Apes*. Superheroes, such as Superman and Batman, appeared in graphic novels long before they appeared at the theater. Visit your local library. Your favorite TV show or movie might be based on a book too!