

Finish Line

Isabel laced up her sneakers and adjusted her cap. She was ready to run. She had been training with Run Kids Club every Wednesday for six months and she knew she'd be able to finish the 5K race without any problems. Each week they increased the amount they ran, earning bracelets for every lap. Her pace was steady. She was unstoppable.

Isaac wasn't so sure. He nervously pulled at the bottom of his t-shirt. What if he couldn't make it the whole way? What if he came in last? At the final meeting of the Run Kids Club they had done a practice 5K. He didn't finish all the laps and he didn't get all the bracelets. Instead he got a cramp in his side and walked most of the way. He was worried that would happen again today, while everyone was watching.

And everyone *was* watching. Families and friends of all the runners lined the course. Isabel's mom and dad were on the sidelines, waving their water bottles in the air and cheering. Isaac's grandma sat in her camp chair and smiled at him. His little brother ran circles around the balloon arch at the finish line. Isabel was energized by the audience. Isaac was embarrassed.

The Run Kids Club coach, Mr. Morelli, led the stretches. "Up to the sky!" he bellowed. "Down to the ground!" Isaac reached as low as he could. Isabel's hands were flat on the track, but Isaac could only make it to his ankles. He

peeked around at the other kids and was relieved to see that not all of them were as flexible as Isabel. But most of them reached lower than Isaac. His fear of being last grew stronger. What if he had to cross the finish line last, all alone, with all eyes on *him*?

The school chorus sang the national anthem and Mr. Morelli asked the runners to recite the Run Kids Club pledge. Isabel and Isaac repeated the words, promising to work hard, take care of their bodies and minds, and be good sports. The starting gun sounded. The race had begun.

Isabel hit her stride. She pumped her legs and arms in a steady rhythm. Isaac stumbled a few times, but at least he didn't get a cramp. The kids pounded around the course to the sound of the cheering fans.

The sun warmed Isabel's back and she smiled. The finish line was in sight! She ran through the balloon arch ahead of rest of the runners. First place!

Isabel walked around to cool down while she watched other kids cross the line. Groups of two and three runners finished, wiping sweat from their foreheads and reaching for the water cups the volunteers held out to them.

At the back of the pack was Isaac. Would he be last? He was only a few steps behind the two runners in front of him. With a stride or two he could catch up and they would all cross the finish line together. Phew. He wouldn't be alone. But then, just as he caught up to them, BAM!



Isaac tripped and fell. Smack! He went down hard on the track. His knee hurt and his face turned red. Now he would be last. All alone. Just as he'd feared. He thought about rolling off to the side and not finishing at all. Maybe no one would notice.

As he debated what to do, Isaac saw someone jogging towards him. It was Isabel! She reached down for his hand and helped him to his feet. The two of them ran together the rest of the way, through the balloon arch, and into the welcoming wave of the crowd. They smiled at each other. So *this* was what victory felt like.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. What did NOT happen right before the race?
 - a. They stretched.
 - b. The chorus sang the national anthem.
 - c. They recited the Run Kids Club pledge.
 - d. They received bracelets.

2. What did Isaac do to show he was nervous before the race?
 - a. He laced up his sneakers.
 - b. He adjusted his cap.
 - c. He pulled at the bottom of his t-shirt.
 - d. He touched his ankles.

3. How did Isabel feel about the race?
 - a. Nervous
 - b. Confident
 - c. Bored
 - d. Sad

4. Why do you think Isabel went back to run with Isaac?
 - a. She wanted to be a good sport.
 - b. She had extra energy to burn.
 - c. Her mom and dad asked her to go.
 - d. Mr. Morelli made her.

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

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