Behind the Curtain

How body signals and interpretations shape emotion

PS.6.3 "Explain the biological and cognitive components of emotion."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two body responses, circle two thoughts or interpretations, and number one place where a change in thinking affects an emotion. Use your marks to trace how biological and cognitive processes work together.

Before the Solo

1. Five minutes before a school concert, Maya waits behind the curtain for her first solo. She hears the audience talking and notices her hands trembling. Her brain detects that the performance matters, and the sympathetic branch of her nervous system increases her heart rate and breathing. Hormones such as adrenaline help prepare her body to act. Maya thinks, "If I miss a note, everyone will judge me." That thought is an appraisal, or interpretation, of what could happen. Her racing heart is a biological response, while her prediction about the audience is a cognitive response. Together, they shape her fear.

2. A friend quietly reminds Maya that the audience came to enjoy the music, not to grade every note. Maya remembers a successful rehearsal and decides that one mistake would not ruin the song. This new appraisal does not instantly stop her heartbeat, but it makes her feel less threatened. She also breathes slowly for a minute. Slower breathing can help the body settle as the parasympathetic branch of the nervous system becomes more active. Her changed thinking and shifting body state work together: she still feels alert, but now she describes the feeling as excitement mixed with nerves.

3. Across the curtain, another performer, Leo, has a fast heartbeat too. He interprets the same crowd noise as a sign that people are eager to hear the group. He has performed for large audiences before, so the noise seems familiar rather than dangerous. He feels energized instead of afraid. A fast heartbeat alone cannot tell an observer exactly what a person feels. Physical signals provide information, but the brain also uses memories, expectations, and the current situation to make sense of them. Emotion involves both changes in the body and the meaning a person gives to an event.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do Maya's nervous system and hormones prepare her body before the solo, and how does that response relate to her fear?

2. How does Maya's prediction about missing a note affect her emotion, even though the audience has not judged her?

3. Explain how Maya's new interpretation and slower breathing work together to change how she feels.

4. Maya and Leo both have fast heartbeats. Why might they feel different emotions in response to the crowd?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a situation outside a performance where someone feels a strong emotion. In one paragraph, explain a plausible body response, the person's first interpretation, and how a different interpretation could change the emotion without the body response disappearing at once.

Behind the Curtain

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two body responses, circle two thoughts or interpretations, and number one place where a change in thinking affects an emotion. Use your marks to trace how biological and cognitive processes work together. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Maya's nervous system and hormones prepare her body before the solo, and how does that response relate to her fear?	**Her sympathetic nervous system increases her heart rate and breathing, and hormones such as adrenaline prepare her to act. These body changes are part of her fearful response.**
2	How does Maya's prediction about missing a note affect her emotion, even though the audience has not judged her?	**She predicts that everyone will judge her. Interpreting a possible mistake as threatening helps produce her fear.**
3	Explain how Maya's new interpretation and slower breathing work together to change how she feels.	**She decides one mistake would not ruin the song, so she feels less threatened. Slower breathing helps her body settle, and she feels excitement mixed with nerves.**
4	Maya and Leo both have fast heartbeats. Why might they feel different emotions in response to the crowd?	**Maya expects the audience to judge her, while Leo sees the crowd noise as a sign of interest. His past performances also make the noise seem familiar.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When Sam sees a message that says "We need to talk," Sam's heart beats faster and their stomach tightens. Sam assumes their friend is angry, so the body signals feel like anxiety. Then Sam remembers that their friend has been planning a group project and may just need help. Sam still has a fast heartbeat for a while, but the new interpretation makes the message seem less threatening. Their worry fades into curiosity, showing how a body response and a thought can shape emotion together.

Accept other accurate explanations that connect body responses and interpretations to emotion. For the open task, the new interpretation must change the person's emotion while allowing the body response to continue briefly.