Clues in the Code

Read a robotics story to interpret allusions in context.

7.L.5.a "Interpret figures of speech, including allusions (e.g., literary, biblical, mythological)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four allusions in the passage. Circle nearby details that help you figure out what each one means.

The Narrow Gate

1 At the school robotics meet, our team faced the eighth graders, whose robot had won three tournaments. Their machine zipped around the taped course while ours still wobbled at the starting line. "This is David and Goliath," I whispered to Noor, looking from our tiny cart to their polished metal rover. The challenge was to carry foam blocks through a narrow gate and stack them on a platform. We had built our cart from spare parts, and its claw had never lifted more than one block at a time.

2 Before our turn, Noor called the course a Herculean task. The gate was barely wider than our cart, and the blocks kept slipping from the claw during practice. I tightened a loose screw, but I had ignored our Achilles' heel: we had not checked how long the batteries would last or packed replacements. Halfway across the course, the cart slowed. Its lights blinked red, and the claw dropped a block. We still had time to finish, but only if we could keep the motor moving.

3 Then I opened what Noor called Pandora's box: the cart's control menu. I changed one setting to save power, but the cart suddenly turned left whenever I pressed right. Undoing the change brought back the old controls, yet it cost us precious seconds. Noor guided the cart through the gate while I steadied each foam block. We stacked two blocks before time ran out. The eighth graders stacked five. On our walk home, Noor said our small team had learned more from the failed run than from an easy win.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does “David and Goliath” suggest about the two teams? Use a detail from the passage.

2. Why does Noor call the course a “Herculean task”?

3. What is the team’s “Achilles’ heel,” and why does that phrase fit?

4. Why does the narrator call the control menu “Pandora’s box”?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences about a new situation outside robotics. Use one allusion from the passage in the first sentence, then explain what it means in your situation in the second sentence.

ANSWER KEY

Clues in the Code

GRADE 7 · 7.L.5.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four allusions in the passage. Circle nearby details that help you figure out what each one means. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does "David and Goliath" suggest about the two teams? Use a detail from the passage.	**The narrator's team is the underdog. Its cart is small and wobbly, while the eighth graders have a polished robot that has won three tournaments.**
2	Why does Noor call the course a "Herculean task"?	**The course seems extremely difficult because the gate is barely wider than the cart and the blocks keep slipping from its claw.**
3	What is the team's "Achilles' heel," and why does that phrase fit?	**Its weakness is battery planning: the team did not check how long the batteries would last or pack replacements. The cart slows during the run.**
4	Why does the narrator call the control menu "Pandora's box"?	**Opening the menu leads to an unexpected problem: after the narrator changes a setting, the cart turns left when told to go right, costing the team time.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After the school play lost its lead actor, rewriting every scene overnight felt like a Herculean task. The job seemed enormous because our group had only one evening to change the script and rehearse.

Accept interpretations supported by specific details from the passage. For Part 3, look for a new situation in which the chosen allusion fits and an explanation that makes its meaning clear.