

School Contests



Talk About It

What challenges and responsibilities come with entering a contest? What emotions can affect the contestants?



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Vocabulary

slumped	strands
soggy	gigantic
capable	credit
categories	luminous

Context Clues

Synonyms are words that mean the same or almost the same thing as other words. For example, *huge* is a synonym for *gigantic*. When you read an unfamiliar word, check to see if there is a synonym nearby to use as a context clue.

The Talent Contest



by Howard Gabe

As Danny put his lunch tray onto the cafeteria table, milk spilled all over his sandwich. He sat down, hung his head forward, and **slumped** over the food in front of him. Frowning, he began peeling the **soggy** milk-soaked bread from his sandwich. "This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever done!" he said.

"It's not that bad," said his friend Elena, who was sitting across from him. "Just get another sandwich."

"Sandwich? What sandwich? I am talking about the talent contest. It's only two weeks away and I don't know what I'm doing! Everybody will laugh at me. It's inevitable. There's no way to avoid it!"

"Don't be so negative, Danny," said Elena as she rolled her eyes. "You're going to be great. You're very **capable**. You have the skills to do just about anything."

Danny moved his lunch tray to the side and rested his head on the table.



“Sit up Danny,” ordered Elena.
 “I have an idea. Let’s brainstorm a list of things you could do. We’ll divide the list into **categories** or groups. Let’s start with music. You play the piano, right?”

“I stopped taking lessons in third grade,” said Danny.

“What about singing a song?” suggested Elena.

Danny shook his head no. “Let’s move on to another category.”

“What about juggling?” asked Elena, as she twisted thin **strands** of hair around her finger.

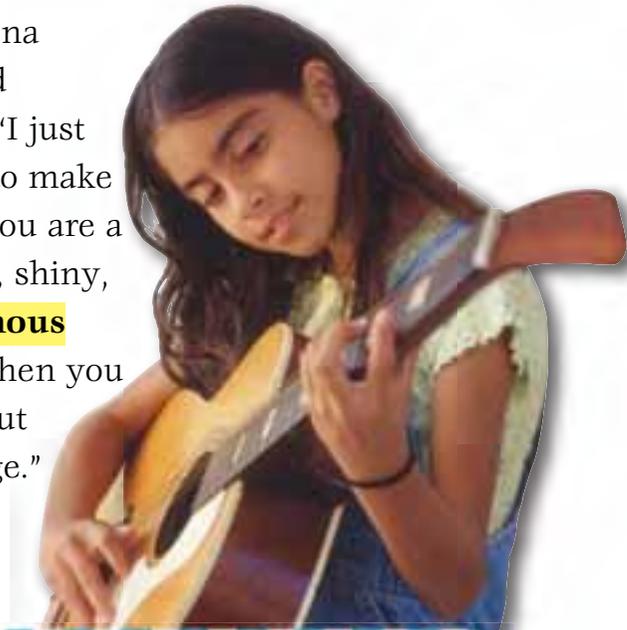
“I don’t know how to juggle!” Danny almost shouted. “Elena, how did I get myself into this huge, **gigantic** mess?”

“Stop being so...” Elena paused. “That’s it, DRAMATIC!” Elena shouted excitedly. “You could do a dramatic

reading. You definitely have the talent for it. Mrs. Pace always calls on you to read aloud in class. You could read a play aloud. Maybe you could even get extra **credit** from Mrs. Pace. She rewards students with points for doing extra reading work.”

Danny thought for a minute. Then he smiled. “Elena,” Danny said, “you are a great friend!”

Elena smiled back. “I just want to make sure you are a bright, shiny, **luminous** star when you step out onstage.”



Reread for Comprehension



Story Structure Character and Plot

A Character and Plot Chart helps you figure out a character’s personality and events of the plot. These traits and events are part of story structure. Use your Character and Plot Chart as you reread “The Talent Contest” to figure out Elena’s traits and how her actions affect the plot of the story.

Character	Plot