Jay is waiting for that once-in-a lifetime call to find out if he gets to participate in a certain game show. Read this selection to see what happens and answer the questions that follow.

Is That Your Final Answer?

by Steve Pricone

Setting: A living room. Couch is at one side. Telephone is on small table at other side.
At Rise: JAY is on couch, elbows on knees, chin cupped in hands, staring at phone. MICHELE enters, approaches JAY.

MICHELE: Jay! (JAY leaps in fright, yelps, and places a hand upon his chest.)
JAY: Don’t do that!
MICHELE: Do what?
JAY: Sneak up on me like that! I can feel my heart beating a mile a minute!
(Sits back down)
MICHELE: Sorry! (HANNAH enters. JAY continues to stare at phone throughout the play, rarely making eye contact with others.)
HANNAH: (Sarcastically) You have to forgive my brother, Michele. He’s waiting for a call from Regis.
MICHELE: Regis who?
JAY: Regis! Regis Philbin!
MICHELE: Oh, you mean the millionaire guy? Why would he be calling you?
(Suddenly impressed and excited) Are you going to be on the show?
JAY: (Proudly) Could be. I made the first cut, and now I’m waiting to hear if I’ll be selected to go on the show.
MICHELE: (Hugging JAY around the neck as he continues to stare at the phone) Wow! A millionaire! I think I love you!
HANNAH: Not so fast. Jay did answer the test questions over the phone. (MICHELE claps approvingly.) But he still has to get that last call—and that is totally random. A computer just picks a bunch of numbers and dials them.
JAY: (Nodding as he stares) It’ll call.
HANNAH: Know how many people probably answered those questions correctly?
MICHELE: How many?
HANNAH: Lots! How hard could they have been? I mean, Jay got them right!
JAY: They were hard, Hannah. And you had only ten seconds to punch in the correct order on the keypad.
HANNAH: I repeat: How hard could they have been if you got them right?
JAY: Plenty hard.
HANNAH: Try me.
JAY: (Looking up at HANNAH) O.K. Place these Presidents who appear on coins in the correct order, from least value to the greatest: Kennedy . . . Lincoln . . . Eisenhower . . . Washington. Ten seconds! (Looks at wristwatch)
HANNAH: Ah, let me see, now—Lincoln, Washington, Kennedy, Eisenhower!
JAY: (Smugly) That was eleven seconds, but I’ll give it to you.
HANNAH: (Eagerly) O.K. Next question.
JAY: Put these birds in alphabetical order: Pelican—kiwi—penguin—ostrich. Ten seconds! (Looks at wristwatch)
HANNAH: Pel-no! Kiwi, ostrich, pelican, penguin!

JAY: Two seconds to spare! A very lucky break! (Phone rings. MICHELE screams. JAY lunges and grabs phone. He answers it desperately.) Hello? . . . (Disappointed and impatient) Oh, hi, Sam . . . . Thanks. Yeah, well, I'm waiting right now for the call, so I have to hang up . . . . Sure. As soon as they call. Bye. (Slams the phone down and returns to the couch. TOM enters.)

TOM: Hey, buddy! I've come to offer myself as a lifeline.

HANNAH: (Laughing) Ha! For what category? Fast foods and Renaissance popes who cut class?

TOM: (Defensively) Hey, come on, Hannah, I know a lot of junk.

HANNAH: (Sarcastically) Exactly. (To JAY; anxiously) O.K., big brother, give me question number three, so I can show you just how ordinary your accomplishment was.

JAY: (Smiling) Name these baseball movies in the chronological order they were released:

HANNAH: (Disgusted) Baseball? Ugh!

JAY: Bang the Drum Slowly, Damn Yankees . . .

HANNAH: Not fair! Who cares about baseball . . . and worse, baseball movies?

JAY: (Enjoying HANNAH'S reaction) A League of Their Own, The Natural. Ten seconds!

HANNAH: (Angrily) I refuse to answer a baseball question. Who would know something like that?

JAY: Time's up. Is that your final answer?

TOM: (Laughing) That's a good one.

HANNAH: (Annoyed; to TOM) Who asked you?

JAY: (Smugly) Well, I guess they're all not that easy.

HANNAH: Yeah. Some are just plain stupid.

JAY: Well, I got it right. And I'm going to win a million dollars! (MICHELE hugs him again.)

HANNAH: Do you really think you're going to win a million dollars? Do you really think you'll succeed where so many have failed?

JAY: Watch me. I'm going all the way! (MICHELE and TOM applaud. HANNAH rolls her eyes.)

HANNAH: Well, I think I'll do some research on the Internet. You know, for the science fair. I don't have much time left. (Starts off)

JAY: (After a moment; in sudden realization) No! (HANNAH turns) You can't tie up the line!

HANNAH: So my world must stop now because of your pipe dream. What am I going to do for the science fair?

JAY: After I win the million, I'll buy you an electron microscope.

TOM: Could I have a wide-screen TV?

JAY: (Expansively) It's yours, buddy. (Pauses) You know, this is so unfair. I answered their questions. I have the skill. I'd be perfect for that show. I've waited for a moment like this all my life. And here I wait—a prisoner of fate, a random draw from a computer.
HANNAH: Life is often random, brother dear. Get used to it. Even if you think you’ve picked the right answer, it might turn out not to be the right “final answer.”

MICHELE: “Final answer”; that sounds so . . . final.

HANNAH: There are tougher questions we have to deal with than baseball movies . . . or which river is the longest . . . or . . .

MS. WHITTINGTON: (Calling from offstage) Jay, have you called Grandma at the hospital yet?

JAY: (Shouting off) I will as soon as the “Millionaire” show calls. (Ms. WHITTINGTON enters)

MS. WHITTINGTON: Jay, you know how sick your grandmother is, and how much it means to her to hear from you.

JAY: I know . . . and as soon as Regis calls, I’m going to call her. I . . .

MS. WHITTINGTON: I think your priorities are a little out of joint here, young man.

JAY: But Mom, it’s a million! A million!

MS. WHITTINGTON: Is that show more important than your grandmother?

JAY: Of course not. But this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance! I can always call Grandma.

MS. WHITTINGTON: (Clearing her throat; holding back her emotions) You think so?

HANNAH: (Concerned) Mom? (Ms. WHITTINGTON exits. Phone rings. MICHELE and TOM scream. JAY leaps at the phone.)

JAY: (Answering nervously) Hello? Hello, Regis? . . . Grandma! Hi! . . . I was going to call you as soon as I was done with this important phone call. . . . Oh no, no, Grandma, you’re not interrupting me . . . it’s just that—well—well, how are you? You sound tired. . . . Visit you? Sure, Grandma, Hannah and Mom and I are coming out to St. Louis in two weeks. . . . November 16th . . . Of course we’re still on for lunch. (Chuckles) Maybe I can sneak you up a sausage and pepper sandwich. . . . You don’t have to hang up, Grandma—well, yeah, I guess my call is important, but . . . O.K., I’ll see you soon. I’ll tell Hannah and Mom you said “hello.”

HANNAH: (Shouting at the phone) Hi, Grandma! I love you! See you on the 16th.

JAY: I love you, too, Grandma. Bye. (JAY hangs up phone. To HANNAH) She sounded tired. (Phone rings again. JAY picks it up without so much anxiety this time.) Hello? . . . Yes, this is he. . . . (Suddenly) You’re kidding! Oh, yeah! I’d love to be on the show! (Others scream) . . . . Yes, I know. New York City. . . . Yes, I can be there by ten o’clock. . . . This is so cool. . . . How many lifelines do I get again? . . . O.K. . . . Yeah, November 16th will be . . . wait a minute. Did you say November 16th? . . . Oh. Isn’t there another day? . . . Oh, I see. (Sighs deeply and thinks for a long moment) I . . . ah . . . I think I have to pass on being on the show. . . . Oh, I know, I know. . . . A million dollars. . . . Yes, I’m sure. . . . Well, it’s personal. . . . Yes—that’s my final answer. (He slowly, gently hangs up the phone, with his head bowed sadly. HANNAH walks over to JAY and places her hand upon his shoulder.)
HANNAH: Good answer. You win. *(She kisses him gently upon the head as curtain falls.)*

“Is That Your Final Answer?” a play by Steve Pricone from *PLAYS: The Drama Magazine for Young People*, November 2000. Copyright © 2000, Sterling Partners, Inc., P.O. Box 600160, Newton, MA 02460.

1. Which of the following is the **main** idea of the play?
   A. setting realistic goals
   B. overcoming great odds
   C. learning how to compromise
   D. recognizing what is most important

2. Which is the **most important** conflict in the play?
   A. Jay vs. Hannah
   B. Jay vs. Regis
   C. Jay vs. his mom
   D. Jay vs. himself

3. Which **best** describes Hannah’s relationship with her brother Jay?
   A. bitter
   B. competitive
   C. hostile
   D. indifferent

4. Why does Michele scream the first time the phone rings?
   A. She wants to answer Jay’s question.
   B. She thinks it is a call from Regis.
   C. She is expecting a call from Sam.
   D. She is startled by Tom’s entrance.

5. Which **best** explains why the stage directions indicate that Jay is smiling when he says, “Name these baseball movies in the chronological order they were released”?
   A. He knows Tom will be able to answer the question.
   B. He is happy that Hannah is so interested in the questions.
   C. He knows Hannah does not know much about baseball.
   D. He is happy he can impress Michele with his knowledge.
6. Which **best** explains why the author includes this line in the play?

   **HANNAH:** There are tougher questions we have to deal with than baseball movies . . . or which river is the longest . . . or . . .

   **A** to create sympathy for Jay  
   **B** to reveal Hannah’s wisdom  
   **C** to foreshadow the choice Jay will have to make  
   **D** to reduce the tension building between Jay and Hannah

7. Which **best** describes Michele’s attitude toward Jay?

   **A** concerned  
   **B** enthusiastic  
   **C** impatient  
   **D** puzzled

8. Which **best** describes how Ms. Whittington’s entrance affects the play?

   **A** It changes the mood.  
   **B** It introduces irony.  
   **C** It reduces suspense.  
   **D** It settles a conflict.

9. When Hannah says, “But he still has to get that last call—and that is totally random,” what does the word **random** mean?

   **A** unfair  
   **B** unpredictable  
   **C** unreasonable  
   **D** unusual

**End of Set**

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## Answers to

**English I Textual Analysis Sample Items**

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