

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.

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| <p>1. Which of the following is the main idea of the play?</p> <p>A setting realistic goals</p> <p>B overcoming great odds</p> <p>C learning how to compromise</p> <p>D recognizing what is most important</p> | <p>4. Why does Michele scream the first time the phone rings?</p> <p>A She wants to answer Jay’s question.</p> <p>B She thinks it is a call from Regis.</p> <p>C She is expecting a call from Sam.</p> <p>D She is startled by Tom’s entrance.</p> |
| <p>2. Which is the most important conflict in the play?</p> <p>A Jay vs. Hannah</p> <p>B Jay vs. Regis</p> <p>C Jay vs. his mom</p> <p>D Jay vs. himself</p> | <p>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”?</p> <p>A He knows Tom will be able to answer the question.</p> <p>B He is happy that Hannah is so interested in the questions.</p> <p>C He knows Hannah does not know much about baseball.</p> <p>D He is happy he can impress Michele with his knowledge.</p> |
| <p>3. Which best describes Hannah’s relationship with her brother Jay?</p> <p>A bitter</p> <p>B competitive</p> <p>C hostile</p> <p>D indifferent</p> | |

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 word **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*

Passage Title	Question Number	Correct Answer	Thinking Skill	Objective Number
Is That Your Final Answer?	1	D	Integrating	5.01
Is That Your Final Answer?	2	D	Analyzing	5.01
Is That Your Final Answer?	3	B	Analyzing	5.01
Is That Your Final Answer?	4	B	Analyzing	5.01
Is That Your Final Answer?	5	C	Analyzing	5.01
Is That Your Final Answer?	6	C	Generating	4.02
Is That Your Final Answer?	7	B	Analyzing	5.01
Is That Your Final Answer?	8	A	Analyzing	4.02
Is That Your Final Answer?	9	B	Analyzing	6.01