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Lexile Level – 900

Word Count – 1105

Standard – RL.8.2 *Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.*

Roberto and Julia



Roberto has a problem that has been around for centuries. He has fallen in love with the wrong girl. Julia is the daughter of his sworn enemy. They fell in love on the steps that separate their two worlds. Steps that are forbidden.

It is the year 2525, and overpopulation is the plague of the century. Ten years ago, the lawmakers of Zorien decided to do something about it. They created a whole new village underground, complete with housing developments, schools, playgrounds and shopping malls. Families were randomly chosen through a lottery to move underground. Objections to these orders were not permitted. Once underground, contact between the two civilizations was strictly prohibited and enforced by the law. They would be living in two separate worlds. According to the new statute, they had to stay underground to keep overpopulation at bay.

It didn't take long for the people living above, the Highlanders, to gain a feeling of superiority over the Underlings who lived below. Living above made them feel "better" and more important. In fact, the word "Underling" soon became the highest level of insult among Highlander teenagers. To be called an Underling became a reason to come to blows.

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Initially, life underground for the Underlings was pretty good. They enjoyed the new facilities. Football games were played on Friday nights at the various high schools. Parents worked at jobs they enjoyed. Children went on after high school to pursue advanced degrees.

After living underground for ten years, most teenagers didn't really think about the disadvantages. After all, they were in preschool when they moved below, and didn't remember much about life above. Julia was an exception to this rule. She was obsessed with going back upstairs. She missed the feeling of the sun shining on her face, and the wind blowing through her hair. She missed the sounds of birds singing in the trees, and the smell of springtime flowers. It is this desperation that brought her to the bottom of the stairwell on that fateful day. The only stairwell that separated these two worlds.

Since Roberto was a Highlander, he had access to all of the benefits Julia was missing. So, of course, those were the things that he didn't pay much attention to. He did, however, have an obsession of his own. Highlanders had many rights, but they were forbidden to go down the stairwell to the population below. Hence, his obsession. Since his father was a high officer of Zorien, he had access to the codes of the door that led to the stairwell. Roberto came across the codes one day in his father's "secret hiding spot", and put them to memory.

It all happened on a beautiful spring morning in April. Julia was at the bottom of the stairwell, desperately searching for a crack of sunlight from the doorway above. The sunshine, however, hit her like a tidal wave when Roberto came bursting through the door.

"What are you doing here?" Roberto asked with authority in his voice.

Julia fell to the ground, shielding her eyes from the sun's penetrating rays. After ten years underground, she had forgotten the strength behind the sunshine. After a few minutes, she stole a glance in Roberto's direction. That's all it took. Just one glance. Roberto's anger and feelings of superiority vanished in that moment. For both of them, it was love at first sight.

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They began meeting at the stairwell every Friday. They exchanged hopes and dreams, dreams about a world where they could be together. They exchanged letters and small gifts, as well as promises to never let the world get in their way.

Everything came to a screeching halt when Roberto's father, Angelo, caught them on the stairs. He found one of Julia's letters, enclosed with rose petals, in Roberto's room, and figured out what they were up to. Where had Julia gotten the flower petals? Flowers did not grow below. Roberto must have initially given the flowers to Julia, who returned some of the petals in the letter.

Roberto and Julia begged Angelo to keep their secret, but he refused to hear their petitions. His son had broken a major law in Zorien, and Angelo insisted on reporting him to the authorities.

The Chief Council of Zorien met, and it was only Angelo's high position in the department that kept Roberto out of jail until after the trial. A warrant for the arrest of Julia was sent to the Underlings. The warrant was ignored, as the Underlings knew Julia would never get a fair trial. More orders were sent, but each of them was disregarded.

This infuriated the Highlanders, who wanted to put the Underlings in their place. As time went on their anger grew, and talk of a full-scale attack began to take place. The Highlanders wanted to show the Underlings who was in charge.

Army tanks from long ago were called out of storage. Unfortunately, they hadn't been tested on Zorien since the village was created below. The leaders were in such a hurry to show their dominance, that they didn't consider this important fact.

Twenty tanks pulled into Zorien from all different angles. The rumbling could be heard from miles around. The rumbling of the tanks aboveground the ground could be heard, as well as the rumbling of the concrete that began to fall below. The weight of the tanks was too much for the platform that separated the Highlanders from the Underlings, and the ground began to cave-in.

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As soon as Roberto realized what was happening, he took off like a shot for the stairwell. Angelo saw Roberto leave, and followed closely behind. Roberto was halfway down the stairs when he saw Julia from a distance running towards him. They almost made it. Roberto and Julia were within five feet of each other when their worlds literally collided.

There were many casualties that day, mostly among the Underlings. Fortunately for Roberto and Julia, they were not among the deceased. Angelo pulled them both out of the rubble after dialing 911. They both survived, but spent many months recovering in the hospital.

With the collapse of the platform, the casualties, and the injuries, the Highlanders finally saw the error of their ways. They settled their differences with the Underlings, and helped them rebuild. These two groups no longer refer to each other as Highlanders and Underlings, but simply, as Zoriens. Many staircases and elevators were built, and all Zoriens travel and live wherever they please.

Roberto and Julia will be starting their senior year at Zorien High School in the fall.

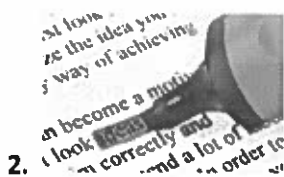
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RL.8.2

1. What is the theme of this story? Analyze how the actions of the Highlanders helped develop this theme.

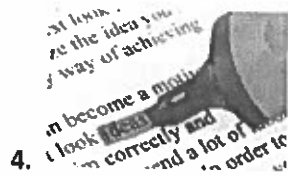


2. Highlight sentences from the story that BEST represent the conflict and the climax. Then, summarize the conflict and the climax in your own words.

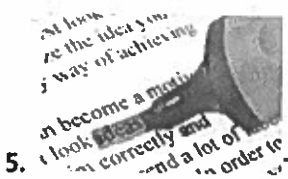
3. Analyze and explain how the setting of this story increased the conflict and pushed the plot forward.



RL.8.3, RL.8.4, RL.8.6, RL.8.7



4. Highlight the sentences from the story that show Angelo's discovery. Explain how this discovery provoked a decision.



5. There are at least two similes, two metaphors, two idioms, and two examples of personification in this story. Try to find and highlight all of them. Choose one to analyze below, and then explain its impact on the story.

6. There are at least two examples of dramatic irony in this story. Dramatic irony is when the reader and a character know more than other characters in the story. Explain at least one example of dramatic irony found in this narrative.

7. Analyze how this story stays faithful, but also departs from, the original Romeo and Juliet play written by William Shakespeare. A summary of this play can be found here: <http://www.gradesaver.com/romeo-and-juliet/study-guide/summary> Explain your conclusions below.



RL.8.9, RL.8.7

8. Analyze the pattern of events, and elements of the setting. Based on this knowledge, what do you suppose is the genre of this narrative?

9. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was written and performed in play form. *Roberto and Julia* was written as a narrative. In the boxes below, list the advantages and disadvantages of a dramatic performance of *Roberto and Julia*. Then, on the next page, explain which is the better form for this story.

Advantages

Disadvantages

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RL.8.7

Which is the best form, dramatic or narrative? Cite the evidence for your decision.
