There was once a baby koala so soft and round that all who saw her loved her. Her name was Koala Lou.

The emu loved her. The platypus loved her. And even tough little Koala Klaws next door loved her.

But it was her mother who loved her most of all. A hundred times a day she would laugh and shake her head and say, “Koala Lou, I DO love you!”

Whenever she stretched in the early morning sun, or climbed a gum tree, or bravely went down the path all by herself, her mother would smile and say, “Koala Lou, I DO love you!”

The years passed and other koalas were born – brothers and sisters for Koala Lou. Soon her mother was so busy she didn’t have time to tell Koala Lou that she loved her.

Although of course she did.
Every night, as she curled up under the stars, Koala Lou thought about the times when her mother had looked at her and said, “Koala Lou, I DO love you!’ and she longed for her to say it again. One night Koala Lou had a splendid idea. Preparations had begun for the Bush Olympics. SHE would enter the Olympics! She would compete in the gum tree climbing event, and she would win, and her mother would fling her arms around her neck and say again, “Koala Lou, I DO love you!”

Koala Lou began her training right away. She jogged and puffed and lifted weights and panted. She hung from a branch with one claw at a time till she ached. She did push-ups till her stomach hurt, and last of all, she climbed the tallest tree that she could find, over and over and over again.


At last the day of the Bush Olympics arrived.

Koala Klaws had also entered the gum tree climbing event and everyone knew how fast she was, but Koala Lou wasn’t scared. She saw her mother in the crowd and imagined her saying again, “Koala Lou, I DO love you!” Her heart filled with hope.

It was Koala Klaws who went first. Her climb was a record-breaking twenty-two meters in seventy seconds flat. The spectators whistled and cheered and wildly waved their party hats.
“Can I do better than that?” wondered Koala Lou. “I must.” As she stepped toward the tree, a hush fell over the crowd. “On your mark,” said the kookaburra. “Get set – GO!”

Koala Lou leapt onto the tree. Up and up and up she climbed – higher and higher and higher. Faster and faster and faster until – There she was, right at the very top! The spectators roared and clapped and stamped their feet.

But she wasn’t fast enough. In spite of all her training and all her hoping, it was Koala Klaws who won the gum tree climbing. Koala Lou came second.

Koala Lou went off and hid. She heard the shouts of the Bush Olympics and cried her heart out.

When the first stars of evening appeared in the sky, Koala Lou crept home through the dark and up into the gum tree. Her mother was waiting for her. Before she could say a word, her mother had flung her arms around her neck and said, “Koala Lou, I DO love you! I always have, and I always will.”

And she hugged her for a very long time.
1. Part A

What does this sentence mean as it is used in Paragraph 12 of “Koala Lou”?

"Her heart filled with hope."

a. She hoped she would win the competition.
b. She hoped the audience would be happy.
c. She hoped she could make her mother proud.
d. She hoped she would break the record.

Part B

Which statement best supports the answer to Part A?

a. “She saw her mother in the crowd and imagined her saying again, ‘Koala Lou, I DO love you!’”
b. “The spectators whistled and cheered and wildly waved their party hats.”
c. “Her climb was a record-breaking twenty-two meters in seventy seconds flat.”
d. “She would compete in the gum tree climbing event, and she would win...”

2. Part A

What is the central message of this story?

a. When you love somebody, you are proud of them, even if they don’t win.
b. It’s a good idea to enter a competition to make others proud of you.
c. Hard work brings you success.
d. Sometimes you lose, even if you practice.
Part B

Which detail from “Koala Lou” supports the answer to Part A?

a. “In spite of all her training and all her hoping, it was Koala Klaws who won the gum tree climbing. Koala Lou came second.”
b. “SHE would enter the Olympics.”
c. “And she hugged her for a very long time.”
d. “She jogged and puffed and lifted weights and panted.”

3. Part A

Fill in the table. Add the effect of each event in the story.

a. Koala Lou wanted her mom to start telling her she loves her.
b. Her mom stopped telling Koala Lou that she loves her.
c. Koala Lou lost, but her mom told her she loves her anyway.
d. Koala Lou suddenly had lots of little brothers and sisters.
e. She competed in the Bush Olympics.

        d →     →     →     →     →    
Read the story titled “Abby Takes Her Shot” by Susan M. Dyckman. Then answer questions 4 through 6.
A blast of the buzzer ended the game, and the Hawks had won another close one.

"Yes!" shouted Abby, leaping from the bench. Her throat hurt from cheering so hard. The Hawks were undefeated after thirteen games – the best record a Willow Grove Middle School team had ever had.

Not that Abby had made much of a contribution. Her playing time totaled only about ten minutes for the entire season. It didn’t help when her brother Michael teased her as she walked toward the locker room. "You’re a cheerleader in a basketball uniform," he said. "All you need are pompoms."

Abby felt her Mom’s eyes on her from the bleachers. Abby forced a little wave, but her eyes stung from tears. She ducked into the bathroom before joining Coach McKenzie and her teammates.

Coach was all smiles. "Girls, your defense was awesome," she said. "And Kathy, your free-throw shooting helped a lot. Nice game."

Abby felt like shouting, "My free-throw shooting could help, too – if I could just get in the game!" She thought of the hours she’d spent practicing. Foul shots, lay-ups, dribbling.

Mom said it was worth it. Abby was a fifth-grader and she’d made the team. Made it through two rounds of cuts during the try-outs. But Abby learned quickly that making the team and playing in the games were two different things.

Mom was waiting in the car. Abby blinked back tears as she opened the door. She knew Mom wanted her to succeed as much as Abby wanted to herself.

"Are you OK?" Mom asked.

Abby swallowed hard and nodded. Mom squeezed her hand as they pulled out of the parking lot. Mom always knew when it was best to say nothing.

Suppertime was quiet. Dad had taken Michael to a Scout meeting, so Abby was spared her brother’s teasing. She and Mom talked about next week’s class trip to the aquarium. After clearing the table, Abby went to her room to do her homework.

When she’d finished, Abby grabbed her basketball and raced downstairs. As she flicked on the outdoor lights, Mom came up behind her. "Want some company?" she asked.

"I guess," Abby answered.

Mom took her spot under the basket. Abby always led off their "make it, take it" games.

"I know what you’re going to say," Abby began. "I made the team and I should be happy."

"Not this time, Abby," Mom said. She passed the ball back and Abby hit her second jump shot in a row. "I just want to say that I’m proud of you for hanging in there."

Abby’s next shot bounced off the rim. Mom grabbed the ball and dribbled back to the free-throw line.

"What time is your game on Saturday?" Mom asked as she shot.

"Ten-thirty," Abby said. She held the ball tightly and looked at Mom. "I really thought I’d play more. Even in fifth grade."
‘I know you did, honey.’ Mom put her arms around Abby and hugged her tight.

‘Your time will come.’

The gym was packed for Saturday’s game, the last one of the season. The lead seesawed back and forth, and the Hawks’ starters were breathing hard at half time. Coach McKenzie was encouraging. “Stick to your game,” she said. “Work the ball around until you get an open shot.”

The crowd cheered as the second half began. Abby watched intently as the players ran up and down the court. The score remained close, and the Hawks trailed by one point in the final minute.

“Come on, Hawks,” Abby breathed. A few seconds later, Kathy stole the ball and raced toward the basket. As she went up for the shot, an opponent slammed into her, knocking her to the floor. Kathy did not get up. The gym got very quiet as Coach McKenzie and the trainer checked her ankle.

Finally, Kathy was helped to the bench. She would be all right, but she definitely was not going back into the game.

The referee came over to the bench. “Coach, you need a sub at the free-throw line. She gets two shots.”

Coach looked at the players on the bench. She’d always stressed the importance of free throw shooting. Who had paid attention? Kathy, for one. And... Abby. She hadn’t played much this season, but she can certainly shoot.


Abby’s stomach flipped. “Me?” she said. “Now?”

Coach stepped closer to her. “I’ve watched you in practice,” she said. “You can do this.”

Abby jumped up, reported in at the scorer’s table, and walked to the line. She glanced at the scoreboard. Two points and a few seconds of defense would win the game. The referee handed Abby the ball. She took a deep breath. Two bounces. She crouched and let the ball fly.

Swish.

The crowd roared.

“One more,” Abby thought. She caught the ball. Bounce, bounce. Shoot.

The gym exploded with cheers as the ball went through the hoop. Seconds later the buzzer sounded. The Hawks were undefeated. Abby’s time had come.
4. Part A

Why was basketball so important to Abby?

a. Her brother’s teasing made her want to prove him wrong.
b. She had worked hard on her free-throw.
c. Her mother was good at basketball, and she wanted to be good, too.
d. She was in fifth grade.

Part B

Which statement best supports the answer to Part A?

a. “Abby was a fifth grader and she’d made the team.”
b. “...Mom asked as she shot.”
c. “You’re a cheerleader in a basketball uniform,’ he said.”
d. “Coach stepped closer to her. ‘I’ve watched you in practice,’ she said. ‘You can do this.’”

5. Part A

What is the central message of this story?

a. Don’t worry if others tease you.
b. Be a good member of your team.
c. Have a good attitude.
d. If you practice and are patient, your time will come.

Part B
Which statement best supports the answer to Part A?

a. “Abby’s time had come.”
b. “I made the team and I should be happy.”
c. “Come on, Hawks,’ Abby breathed.”
d. “…Abby was spared her brother’s teasing.”

6. Part A

The following ideas are true in this story. Match them with statements from the text. You will use each idea more than once.

a. Abby felt badly that she couldn’t play.
b. Abby’s mom was very encouraging.
c. Abby and her mom shared a love of basketball.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement from the Story</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Abby felt her mom’s eyes from the bleachers.” (Paragraph 4)</td>
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<td>“My free-throw shooting could help, too…” (Paragraph 6)</td>
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<td>“Mom squeezed her hand as they pulled out of the parking lot.” (Paragraph 10)</td>
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<td>“Mom grabbed the ball and dribbled back to the free-throw line.” (Paragraph 17)</td>
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<td>“Mom put her arms around Abby and hugged her tight.” (Paragraph 20)</td>
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Refer to the stories “Koala Lou” and “Abby Takes Her Shot.” Then answer Question 7.

7. Koala Lou and Abby both work hard to reach a goal, but for different reasons. Each learns an important lesson about working hard.

Write an essay that explains how Koala Lou and Abby work hard to reach their goals, and the lessons they each learn because of what happens to them. Use what you learned about the characters to support your essay.