

Horizon Assessment System

ID: 571480

Test: COPY OF: ELA.G10 - Fiction:
Commencement Speaker

Name : _____

Student ID : _____

of Questions: 8

Directions: Read the story and answer the questions that follow.

Commencement Speaker

by Clifton Taulbert

- 1 Thad Odom should have been happy. His older brother David was graduating from college and already had a job awaiting him in Paris with the American Embassy. David's future was the talk of the house, the town, and the school. Thad was a junior in high school and was often asked about his plans for the future, but he had no definite plans. It seemed as if everyone was expecting him to be as focused as his older brother, whose sights had been set on the Foreign Service since the eighth grade. But Thad had no plans. He was a good soccer player but with no real desire to play soccer in college or become a professional. Today, he just wanted the graduation to be over and the talk about his brother's success to cease.

- 2 While Thad waited for the family, he busied himself thinking about his friend Ustad from Algiers, who had played on the soccer team with him during the past year. They had been the best of friends, but due to some paperwork mishaps and legal entanglements, Ustad had recently been sent back to Algiers, and there was nothing Thad could do to help him. It seemed as if no one championed his cause. After Ustad returned to Algiers, they managed to stay in touch with occasional e-mail messages, but Ustad had limited access to a computer. Ustad lived in a small village with only one Internet café. Thad always answered immediately when he did hear from Ustad. They were more like brothers than friends. It seemed as if Thad and Ustad had more in common than Thad did with his own brother, David.

- 3 Today, however, Thad was being very reflective; with his brother soon leaving for Europe, Thad felt even more pressure to have some idea of how he wanted his life to look. But he had no idea at all.

- 4 His father walked by and saw Thad staring out the window. Mr. Odom thought that Thad was thinking about his brother's soon being so far away, and he

went over to cheer Thad up. "Thad, don't worry. We'll all go to visit David next summer. You'll enjoy Paris. I certainly did when I was David's age. Chin up; I know you'll miss your older brother."

5

"I know, Dad, but I was thinking about my friend Ustad. I guess I'll never see him again."

6

"That was too bad about his circumstances, all those legal entanglements. But he's home with his family. I'm sure he's okay."

7

"Yeah, I'm sure he is. He's probably already decided on his college. I wish I was more like David, just sure about everything."

8

"I must admit that your brother was always focused, but you aren't David. We all have different 'turning points' when our immediate future becomes clear. I know you'll have yours. Come on, let's get a move on. Your mother is waiting for us, and we don't want to be late. She wants seats close to the front."

9

In less than an hour, Thad and his family had joined thousands in the basketball arena. All were waiting for the moment when the graduates would file forward. As Thad sat with his parents, his attention was soon captured by the sound of processional music. The ceremony had begun, and the audience stood and watched in proud silence as the graduates and the faculty marched in. When everyone was seated, the program went quickly and smoothly. Thad wished that he didn't have to listen to the commencement speaker, even though he didn't know who he or she was going to be. He was prepared to be bored.



- 10 The president of the university introduced the speaker, a well-known civil rights lawyer from Montgomery, Alabama, who was on staff at the Center for People's Rights. Thad was all set to tune him out. However, as the engaging lawyer discussed the need for more lawyers with international immigration backgrounds to handle the advancing student and worker immigration cases, Thad sat straight up and listened. He was thinking about his friend Ustad and how things may have been different had Ustad known such a lawyer. Much to his parents' surprise, Thad borrowed a pen from his dad and took notes. His parents were both shocked and pleased to see Thad taking so much interest.
- 11 With the graduation over and the family on the way home, Thad spoke up. "Dad, if I become a lawyer, I can help people like Ustad. I never thought about becoming a lawyer."
- 12 "Well, son, it's an honorable profession, and you can sure help a lot of people."
- 13 "Dad, it was as if David's graduation speaker was talking directly to me. He even said some of the same things I had been thinking about. I want to help people like Ustad who may have no one else to champion their cause."
- 14 "Son, this sounds good, but you know that it is going to take a lot of hard work. It'll require some focus on your part."
- 15 "I know I'll have to focus more. Dad, you sound just like Ustad. He was always telling me to focus on my game. This time, I guess I will . . . for the both of us."

Question 1 :

Which word best describes Thad's tone in paragraph 1?

- A:** hopeless
- B:** discontented
- C:** ambitious
- D:** enthusiastic

Question 2 :

Read this sentence from paragraph 1.

David's future was the talk of the house, the town, and the school.

The author uses parallel structure in this sentence to convey the speaker's feeling of —

- A:** motivation to go to college
- B:** jealousy toward his brother
- C:** pressure to be successful
- D:** dedication to his community

Question 3 :

Based on the dialogue in this passage, Thad's dad can *best* be described as —

- A:** overbearing
- B:** destructive
- C:** supportive
- D:** appreciative

Question 4 :

The author *most* likely uses the description of Thad's friend Ustad in paragraph 2 in order to —

- A:** set up Thad's later interest in his future career
- B:** show Thad's disgust for his own brother, David
- C:** comment on the horrifying immigration process
- D:** show the lack of Internet availability in Algiers

Question 5 :

Read this sentence from paragraph 2.

They had been the best of friends, but due to some paperwork mishaps and legal entanglements, Ustad had recently been sent back to Algiers, and there was nothing Thad could do to help him.

In this sentence, the word entanglements means —

- A:** wrong doings
- B:** advice
- C:** champions
- D:** complications

Question 6 :

Which of these phrases *best* states the theme of this passage?

- A:** Success comes to those who have clear goals.
- B:** It is difficult but rewarding to overcome obstacles.
- C:** Each individual's future becomes clear at different times.
- D:** Loyalty to family is more important than loyalty to friends.

Question 7 :

Read these sentences from paragraph 8.

"I must admit that your brother was always focused, but you aren't David. We all have different 'turning points' when our immediate future becomes clear. I know you'll have yours"

The details in this sentence reveal that Thad and David's father is —

- A:** understanding that Thad may take more time to plan his future
- B:** disappointed by Thad's lack of direction
- C:** more proud of David's accomplishments than Thad's
- D:** pessimistic that Thad will be as successful as his brother

Question 8 :

Based on the information in this selection, which career will Thad *most* likely pursue?

- A:** immigration clerk
- B:** professional athlete
- C:** foreign ambassador
- D:** civil rights lawyer