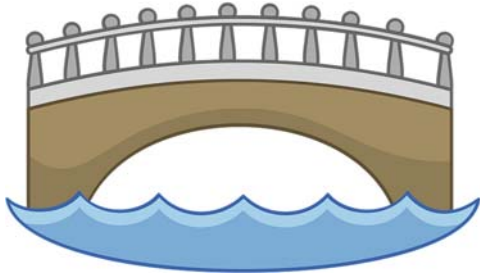


Name _____



Uncovering Universal Truths

Directions: Read the passage carefully, paying attention to how Sasha reacts when faced with fear. Identify the **theme** or the deeper message or lesson the story teaches about courage.

Reflect on whether this theme could apply beyond the story's events: to real people, situations, and cultures. Write a short response explaining how the story reveals a **universal truth** about courage and fear.

"The Bridge at Dusk"

Sasha stood frozen at the edge of the old wooden bridge. The river beneath rushed like a growling beast, dark and relentless. Her younger brother, Eli, was stranded on the far side, clutching the railing and calling her name.

She wanted to run. Her heart pounded so hard it drowned out every other sound. Then she looked up at Eli's frightened eyes and took a deep breath. One step. The boards creaked. Another step. Wind whipped her face, but she kept going until her shaking hand grabbed Eli's arm.

When they reached the other side, Eli whispered, "You weren't scared, were you?" Sasha smiled faintly, her voice trembling. "Of course I was. But being brave doesn't mean you're not scared—it means you keep going anyway."

1. What message or **theme** about courage does Sasha's story teach?
2. How does Sasha's behavior show that courage and fear can exist together?
3. In what ways could this message apply to real-life challenges?
4. Write a short paragraph (4-6 sentences) explaining how Sasha's experience reveals a **universal truth** about courage and fear. Then describe one situation, real or imagined, where this same truth might help someone act bravely.