

Name _____



Trophies And Truths

Directions: Read the passage carefully and pay close attention to how the main character's choices relate to the idea of "winning." Before you begin, think about what the title might mean. Then, as you read, notice how your understanding changes as the story unfolds. Answer the questions that follow.

The Cost of Winning

Carlos had trained for months for the state track finals. Every morning before sunrise, he laced up his shoes and ran until his lungs burned. His best friend, Jamal, trained alongside him, their friendly rivalry pushing them to improve.

On the morning of the race, the stadium buzzed with energy. The whistle blew, and Carlos sprinted forward, his legs pumping like pistons. He noticed Jamal stumble slightly after the second turn, clutching his ankle, but Carlos kept running faster, harder, until he crossed the finish line first.

As the crowd cheered, Carlos lifted his arms in victory. But when he looked back, he saw Jamal sitting on the track, pain etched across his face. The joy in Carlos's chest dissolved into guilt. That night, his trophy felt heavier than he expected.

The next day, he visited Jamal in the hospital. Jamal smiled weakly. "You earned it," he said. Carlos shook his head. "Not if it meant leaving you behind." In that quiet moment, Carlos understood what the title of his triumph really meant—the cost of winning was losing what mattered most.

1. **Title Reflection:** How does the title "The Cost of Winning" connect to Carlos's experience in the story?
2. **Character Change:** What does Carlos realize about success and friendship by the end?
3. **Thematic Analysis:** What lesson does the story teach about the meaning of success or competition?
4. **Theme Statement:** Write one clear sentence that expresses the story's overall message or moral.