

Name _____

Scrutiny at the Science Fair Answer Key

The day of the county science fair had arrived, and the school gym buzzed with energy. Students were setting up trifold displays, adjusting laptop **screens**, and doing final touches on projects they had worked on for months. Eighth grader Tiana was especially nervous. Her project, titled *"The Power of Biodegradable Plastics,"* involved weeks of testing, documenting results, and filming footage for her digital presentation.

Tiana checked her computer **screen**, reviewing the final slides one more time. She noticed a typo and began to **scramble** to correct it before the judges arrived. As she reached into her supply box for a marker, her elbow bumped into the next table. "Oops! Sorry!" she said, noticing that she'd nearly sent a container of baking soda flying.

The student at the next table gave a smile. "No worries. Just keeping my volcano from erupting early," he joked.

Moments later, the head judge, Dr. Ramos, approached. Tiana straightened her notes and smiled, her hands slightly sweaty. Dr. Ramos reviewed her work closely, his eyes scanning the graphs with great **scrutiny**. "Interesting data," he muttered, leaning closer. "Did you test the breakdown rates in both sunlight and shade?"

Tiana nodded. "Yes, I included side-by-side comparisons."

Dr. Ramos tapped his clipboard. "Well done." He then moved to the next display—a homemade **scraper** designed to collect plastic debris from water surfaces. The inventor, Zoe, explained how the **scraper** worked using foam, mesh, and recycled plastic.

Nearby, one team's baking soda volcano erupted too soon, causing a fizzy overflow. A younger student let out a playful **scream**, and the crowd laughed as paper towels were rushed in to clean up the mess.

Tiana glanced down and realized she had ink on her hand. "Ugh," she whispered, wiping it with a **scrap** of napkin. Her nerves were still buzzing. She tried to breathe deeply and unclench her **scrunched** shoulders.

Later, while winners were being announced, Tiana didn't expect her name to be called. But it was. "First place in Environmental Innovation: Tiana Rivera!"

She froze, stunned. Then she walked to the front, smiling as applause filled the gym. Afterward, Dr. Ramos approached and handed her a small card. "Ever think about publishing your findings?" he asked, **scratching** the side of his head.

Tiana looked down at the card—a link to a student research journal. She grinned. "Maybe I will."