Name:_____

Carter's Cardboard Bridge

Carter signed up for the third-grade STEM Fair with a clear goal: build a cardboard bridge strong enough to hold five heavy books. He spent three afternoons cutting, folding, and gluing thick cardboard strips into a neat arch. On testing day, Carter set his bridge across two desks in front of his class. He placed the first two books on top, and the bridge held perfectly steady. Carter smiled and waved to his classmates.



When Carter added the third book, a loud snap rang out. The middle arch crumpled, sending the heavy books crashing to the floor. Carter's face turned red with embarrassment. He quickly swept the bent cardboard into his backpack and sat at his desk, ready to give up on the fair. Seeing his disappointment, Mr. Hayes, the science teacher, walked over. "A broken model isn't a failure, Carter," Mr. Hayes said softly. "Engineers learn how to build stronger things by studying what went wrong." Carter took a deep breath and looked closely at the torn edges. He realized the center had no vertical beams to support heavy weight. That afternoon, he stayed after school to rebuild his design using double-layered cardboard pillars.

At the final STEM Fair showcase on Friday, Carter set up his redesigned bridge. One by one, he stacked all five books onto the cardboard structure. The bridge did not bend or shake. Carter did not win the prize for the flashiest project, but Mr. Hayes presented him with the Master Engineer ribbon for improving his work. Looking at his sturdy bridge, Carter realized that making a mistake was just the first step toward learning how to succeed.

What happened in the story?	What did the character learn as a life lesson?

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Name:_____

S SOMEBODY (Character)
I IN (Setting)
W WANTED (Motivation)
B BUT (Problem)
S SO (Resolution)
T THEN (End)

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Name:_____

1. Plot Summarization — DOK 2

Which sentence best summarizes the beginning, middle, and end of the story?

A. Carter builds a cardboard bridge for a STEM project, quits after it breaks, and watches his classmates win ribbons.

B. Carter builds a cardboard bridge, rebuilds it with stronger supports after it breaks, and succeeds at the STEM Fair.

C. Carter enters a science contest, asks his teacher to build a bridge for him, and wins the prize for flashiest project.

D. Carter places books on a desk, breaks a pair of scissors, and stays after school to clean up the classroom.

2. Central Message — DOK 3

Part A

What is the central lesson of the story?

A. Asking a teacher to complete your project guarantees a high score.

B. Learning from mistakes and trying again leads to growth and success.

C. Winning first place is more important than understanding how things work.

D. Cardboard is too weak to use for building structural models.

Part B

Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?

A. "Carter signed up for the third-grade STEM Fair with a clear goal..."

B. "He placed the first two books on top, and the bridge held perfectly steady."

C. "He realized the center had no vertical beams... so he stayed after school to rebuild his design..."

D. "Carter did not win the prize for the flashiest project..."

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