

Running a Real "Zombie 5K"

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I exercise a lot and try to keep healthy. Last year, I ran in the Boston Marathon with my mom.

Recently, I learned about something called Obstacle Course Racing. This is like a marathon, but they have all these different types of obstacles for you to overcome. You have to climb over walls and slide down ropes. You even crawl through the mud.

They also have a "fun run" called the Zombie 5K. It's a three-mile race during which you are chased by people dressed like zombies!

When I found out about the Zombie 5K, I knew I had to train for this race and win it. I went to the park and found an area where the city has built some free exercise equipment. They have a little jungle gym and some benches to do push-ups on.

Every day after school, I'd go home and change into my gym clothes. I'd ride my bike over to the park and lock it up real tight with a chain. Then, I'd spend about an hour doing pull-ups on the monkey bars and jumping over blocks of wood.

As I did this, I pretended that zombies were chasing me. Sometimes I would scream and run wildly around in a circle. This generally resulted in people looking at me sideways. People would start laughing and pointing. I didn't care. I had a race to prepare for.

The only problem was, I didn't actually know what it would feel like to run while being chased by zombies. So I called my friends Jeff, Amy, and Kristen. I asked if they wanted to have some fun helping me train.

Since it was close to Halloween, a lot of them had monster makeup lying around their homes. A zombie costume isn't that hard—it's mostly just old clothes that you were going to throw out anyway!

The next day, we waited until dusk. I went to the park as planned. I don't know how Jeff and the gang got there. Maybe they changed into their zombie costumes behind a tree. Maybe they got dressed at home and then rode their bikes there (now that would have been funny!).

All I know is that I was running along the track when all of a sudden I heard a loud roar coming from behind me. I turned around, and there was Zombie Amy running full speed in my direction.

"BRAAAAINS!" she said.

"Aw, Amy, come on! That's so cliché! No real zombie says 'brains'!" I said.

She wasn't stopping, though. In fact, she was getting faster. And she seemed to be foaming at the mouth. I noticed other families start to scream and scatter. I guess they believed she was really a zombie.

Amy was obviously really getting into the part, so I decided to play along. I ran as fast as I could until I got to the gate. I jumped over the gate and got the side of my shorts stuck on a prong. Amy wasn't slowing down.

"Come on, Amy, it's just a game!" I yelled. I struggled to free myself from the gate as she got closer and closer. Her eyes looked black, and I could smell her breath.

Suddenly, I felt an arm grab me around my waist and pull me off the gate.

"Come on, let's get out of here!" It was Jeff. He wasn't in a zombie costume.

"Jeff, why aren't you in costume?"

"Because that isn't a costume! She was bitten by a real zombie! Run!"

We started running. I could hear her close behind me now. I could still almost smell her.

We built up speed, and I ran faster than I ever thought I was capable of. Amy was doubling back around now, having gotten in front of us somehow. That's when I saw Jeff grab his neck and start convulsing.

"Amy... she bit me a little bit," he said. "Just a little."

His eyes were getting dark, and he started foaming at the mouth. I knew I had to get to a place they couldn't follow me: the outdoor gym.

I'd been training there for months. I knew the course backwards and forwards. I leaped over the sit-up planks and the balance beams. The zombies were falling all over themselves. They tripped on the grass and couldn't stand up straight on the beam.

Since it had rained last night, there was a puddle of mud surrounding the monkey bars. I looked behind me to see my former friends were slowly gaining on me. I figured they'd fall in the mud puddle, but so would I! So I got my footing on a balance beam and jumped high into the air. I grabbed onto the first monkey bar and swung as hard as I could. The next thing I knew, I was all the way across on the other side.

My zombified friends were slipping around in the mud. They couldn't even stand up straight. Panic was setting in. I knew I could keep running, but where was I running to? Where would I hide?

That's when I saw Kristen.

She didn't appear to be a zombie... yet. She was waving her arms frantically. Could I trust her? I decided that I had to. I had no choice.

I noticed Kristen appeared to be sobbing on the ground. But wait—no. She was *laughing*. Our friends are monsters trying to murder us and she was *laughing*?

She pointed back towards Jeff and Amy, and they were on the ground laughing, too.

"We got you... so... good!" Amy said, laughing so hard she could barely finish speaking.

"You did what? Are you kidding me?"

"It's a joke!" she said.

I was so incredibly angry. I mean, I was really livid! My face felt hot and flushed. "What's wrong with you?" I asked them.

Amy came toward me, wiping away the fake foam from her mouth. Jeff was removing contact lenses.

"You smell horrible!" I said.

"Yeah, uh. We kind of rubbed some spoiled milk on our clothes before we came. You know, to get the full effect," Amy said.

"You've got to admit it was pretty brilliant," Jeff said.

"You really tricked me, you guys."

"We're sorry," Kristen said. "But I watched the whole thing. You *owned* that obstacle course, and you did it under pressure!"

"Well, I guess that's true. I'm not nervous about the race any more!"

"You're going to be amazing, and we'll be there to cheer you on! In zombie makeup, of course."

I started to laugh a little bit. I was still fuming mad and didn't want to laugh. I just couldn't help it.

"I knew real zombies didn't say BRAINS!" I said. "You guys are hacks!"

"BRAAAAINS!" said Amy, holding out her arms to my neck.

I couldn't hold in the laughter any more.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What does the main character decide to train for?
 - A) an obstacle course
 - B) the Boston Marathon
 - C) a Zombie 5K
 - D) a pull-up contest

2. What is the climax of this story?
 - A) when the main character finds out about the Zombie 5K
 - B) when the main character asks her friends to help her train for her 5K
 - C) when the main character is being chased by what she thinks are real zombies
 - D) when the main character realizes her friends are just pretending to be zombies

3. The main character is in good physical shape. What piece of evidence from the text best supports this conclusion?
 - A) She ran in the Boston Marathon with her mother last year.
 - B) She knew she had to train for the Zombie 5K and win it.
 - C) Every day after school, she would change into her gym clothes.
 - D) She would sometimes scream and run wildly around in a circle.

4. What three words best describe the main character in this passage?
 - A) lazy, unhealthy, serious
 - B) hardworking, strong, gullible
 - C) cheerful, intelligent, weak
 - D) shy, quiet, lonely

5. What is the main idea of this passage?
 - A) A girl trains for the Boston Marathon with the help of some terrifying zombies.
 - B) A girl trains for a Zombie 5K with the help of her enthusiastic friends.
 - C) A girl gets chased through a park by a group of actual zombies.
 - D) A girl trains for a Zombie 5K by doing pull-ups on monkey bars.

6. Read these sentences from the passage:

"Amy wasn't slowing down.

'Come on, Amy, it's just a game!' I yelled. I struggled to free myself from the gate as she got closer and closer. Her eyes looked black, and I could smell her breath."

What feeling is the author trying to create with this description?

- A) happiness
- B) annoyance
- C) disgust
- D) suspense

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

The main character wanted to train for a Zombie 5K, _____ she asked her friends to act like zombies and chase her.

- A) after
- B) if
- C) but
- D) so

8. Why did the main character ask her friends to help her train for the "Zombie 5K"? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

9. The main character experienced different feelings at different points while she was running away from her "zombified" friends in the park. What are three different feelings she experienced while she was running away from her "zombified" friends? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

10. Explain whether her friends' zombie trick helped the main character feel mentally prepared for the "Zombie 5K." Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
