

*Alex Ristof*

I could hardly believe that it all came down to this.

One ... final ... choice.

But it was too simple – not at all what I'd come to expect from the Professor. Had I finally proven myself? I laughed in spite of my aching bones. Nope. He'd never release his precious blueprint so easily. Not when it could save so many and ruin him forever.

A drop of sweat rolled down my neck, followed by another, escaping the sticky nest of hair plastered to my scalp. I barely flinched as the rivulets raced down my spine. Considering what I'd been through, this was like the arrival of a blowfly after being devoured by mosquitoes.

I shuddered at the memory of the murky mud slurping around my legs as I waded through that last tunnel. It was so thick with darkness, I'd wondered if I'd ever emerge. The incessant biting of my skin as water-beasts surrounded me was too foul a feeling to dwell on. I dragged myself back to the present.

It all came down to this. Not a fight or an ambush. Not a battle or a trap. But a choice.

The Professor's blueprint was finally in front of me, encased in a glass chest with a fluorescent pink force field pulsating powerfully around the chest's razor-sharp edges. Nearby lay a console, with two clearly labelled buttons.

With a closer look I discovered a message: *Your life or the formula, Georgina. You choose.*

This had to be a trap.

Who would come after me if I failed? Was the Professor testing my character, sure that I would I risk my life rather than return empty-handed?

No, he already knew my character.

With a wry chuckle, I reached out ... unsure if I'd make it back alive.

Read each question carefully and circle one answer.

- 1 Which of the following best describes this text?**
- ballad
  - quest narrative
  - romantic fiction
  - Gothic horror
- 2 In the first sentence, to what does the word *this* refer?**
- the choice the narrator needs to make
  - the narrator's decision to walk through the dark tunnel
  - the need to work out where the Professor has hidden the blueprint
  - a desire to give up looking for the blueprint
- 3 What troubles or concerns the narrator in the opening of the story?**
- how much her bones are aching
  - whether the Professor is going to hand over the blueprint
  - if the formula is worth having
  - how simple it all seems
- 4 What has the narrator had to do to get to this point in the quest?**
- climb up several mountains
  - wade through a series of tunnels
  - hike through murky swamps
  - swim across monster-infested lakes
- 5 What sensation was *too foul a feeling to dwell on*?**
- the sweat running down the narrator's spine
  - the memory of the murky mud
  - the continual bites from water-beasts
  - the thick darkness
- 6 What does the narrator mean in this sentence?**  
*I dragged myself back to the present.*
- She focused her thoughts on what she had gone through to get to this point.
  - She made a plan to get the blueprint.
  - She reluctantly walked back through the tunnel.
  - She forced herself to focus her thoughts on the problem currently facing her.
- 7 What 'barriers' protect the blueprint?**
- a force field and a chest with razor-sharp edges
  - a console and a force field
  - two consoles
  - a message from the Professor
- 8 What is implied in the Professor's message?**  
*Your life or the formula, Georgina. You choose.*
- If the narrator chooses *Your life*, she will not survive to tell the story.
  - If the Professor finds the narrator, he will kill her.
  - If the narrator chooses *the formula*, she will forfeit her life.
  - The formula is deadly.
- 9 What makes the narrator so sure the message is a trap?**
- It seemed too simple a choice, even for the Professor.
  - The Professor was happy to give up the formula to someone who could get this far.
  - The Professor always gave people a choice.
  - It seemed too simple a choice, based on what she knew about the Professor.

**10 What can we conclude about the narrator's fate?**

- She somehow made it out alive, but she didn't necessarily choose *Your life*.
- She chose *Your life*, but she still didn't make it out alive.
- She decided not to try to push either of the buttons.
- She retrieved the blueprint but it killed her.

Text type: Narrative

## NAPLAN\*-style questions: Reading

- 1 quest narrative
- 2 the choice the narrator needs to make
- 3 how simple it all seems
- 4 wade through a series of tunnels
- 5 the continual bites from water-beasts
- 6 She forced herself to focus her thoughts on the problem currently facing her.
- 7 a force field and a chest with razor-sharp edges
- 8 If the narrator chooses *the formula*, she will forfeit her life.
- 9 It seemed too simple a choice, based on what she knew about the Professor.
- 10 She somehow made it out alive, but she didn't necessarily choose *Your life*.