The Robot That Kept Tipping Over



Read the story. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Marcus had spent three weeks designing the arm for his team's robot, and he was proud of every part of it. The arm could stretch high enough to grab a foam block from the top shelf of the practice course, the most valuable position at the county competition. There was only one problem: every time the arm reached its full height, the whole robot toppled over. Marcus attached weights to the back and adjusted the motor, but nothing solved it, and the competition was eight days away.

At Tuesday's meeting, Rosa, who rarely spoke up, slid her notebook across the table. She had sketched a shorter arm that scooped blocks from the bottom shelves. "Each block scores fewer points," she said quietly, "but this design would never tip over."

Marcus felt his face grow warm. He was the team captain, and the tall arm had been his idea from the beginning, so he wanted to insist that he only needed more time. Instead, he suggested a fair experiment: each design would get ten attempts on the practice course. The tall arm toppled over six times. Rosa's arm completed all ten without a single fall and earned more points in total.

The team built Rosa's design that weekend, and at the competition they finished third out of fourteen teams. When a judge asked who had designed the arm, Marcus pointed to Rosa before anyone else could answer.

1. **What is a theme of this story?**

2. **What does "Marcus felt his face grow warm" show about him? What in the paragraph shows it?**

3. **How does Marcus change from the beginning of the story to the end?**

4. **Was the experiment a good way for the team to choose a design? Support your answer with details from the story.**

Answer key

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1. What is a theme of this story?
   A good leader listens to other people's ideas and lets the best idea win, even when it is not his own.

2. What does "Marcus felt his face grow warm" show about him? What in the paragraph shows it?
   It shows he felt embarrassed. The next sentence says he was the captain, the tall arm had been his idea, and he wanted to insist that he only needed more time.

3. How does Marcus change from the beginning of the story to the end?
   At first he is proud of his own design and keeps trying to fix it. By the end he accepts Rosa's better design and gives her the credit in front of the judge.

4. Was the experiment a good way for the team to choose a design? Support your answer with details from the story.
   Sample answer: Yes. It was fair because both arms got the same ten attempts. It showed clearly that the tall arm toppled over six times while Rosa's arm never fell and earned more points, so nobody could argue about the result.