

Read the passage. Then answer the question below.

Shared Vision

"Sylvia, did you hear about the school's new mural design competition? I totally have a great idea for it and I'm going to enter!" Carol yelled as she trotted toward Sylvia from across the cafeteria.

Sylvia nearly dropped the pen she had been using to sketch her own possible mural design. She smoothly slid her notebook over the sketch as Carol plopped down on the empty seat beside her. "Really? That sounds like fun!"

Carol smiled, "Winning is always fun, my friend! I've gotta get busy!"

As Carol sailed away, Sylvia slumped in her seat, ignoring the din of the cafeteria crowd around her. Chewing on the tip of her pen, she pulled out her sketch and looked at it critically. *How will Carol feel if I compete against her*, Sylvia wondered. Several blue ribbons already adorned Carol's walls from community center art shows. Carol was the most competitive person Sylvia knew—and she also happened to be Sylvia's best friend. It probably was silly for her to even think about entering if it meant competing with Carol. The thought made her feet feel like thick mud was stuck to the soles of her shoes. She stuffed the sketch in her notebook, slammed the cover closed, and vowed to worry about her dilemma later.

As the girls walked home that afternoon, Carol jabbered nonstop. Words raced out of her mouth so fast, they bumped into each other. "I got this new paint set I'll use to paint the tiger—our school mascot, of course—jumping over the school banner, in blue, for our school's color. Isn't that great?"

Not really, Sylvia thought. She realized for the first time that she could possibly win, even with Carol in the running. Carol's idea was not particularly original, and the winner wouldn't be painting the mural, only contributing to the design. Still, if she won the contest, she wasn't sure how Carol would respond. When Carol came in second at the talent show last year, she didn't speak to the winner for two months. Was winning a competition worth endangering their friendship? Carol made her laugh;

Carol made gooey chocolate chip cookies and giggled over old movies with her. It was just a design contest. Skipping it would not hurt anything, really. Sylvia tried to ignore the small pang in her midsection as she walked.

All week, Sylvia couldn't keep her mind off the competition. Her design was good, and she knew it. A mosaic of various images, her design captured the diversity of their school and the wide variety of talents and interests of the student body. Maybe she should just tell Carol. She could casually mention she had been thinking of ideas for the school mural and that she might enter, too. Relaxed, laid back—no drama.

"WHAT?" Carol screeched, then promptly burst into laughter, when Sylvia shared the news. "Really? Since when do you draw, anyway?"

Sylvia felt her throat tighten and her eyes burn. *When Carol told her about her idea, had she laughed?*

"Laugh all you want, but I am going to enter, and I might just win." Sylvia stomped off, her steps as thunderous as those of a giant.

That afternoon, with fierce concentration, Sylvia did not stop until she had finished her very best version of the design. With her jaw jutted out, Sylvia quickly left to mail her completed work before she had time to change her mind.

Walking back to the apartment, Sylvia saw Carol waiting for her by the door. Sylvia's steps slowed, her mouth straightened, and her lips thinned to a pencil line. As she approached, Carol stood up and offered Sylvia a small box with a ribbon on it. "Go ahead, open it, even if you are mad at me," Carol stated without any initial greeting.

Sylvia waited, unsure if she wanted to do anything Carol requested. "Please?" Carol added. Sylvia took the box and opened it. Inside was Carol's new paint set. She looked up at Carol with raised eyebrows.

"I'm sorry about earlier. That was really wrong, and I'd like to give you these to make up for it."

Sylvia smiled, but handed back the paint set. "Carol, I appreciate that, but keep your paints. You're going to need them for your design," she winked. Sylvia felt sure that no matter who won, they would both be okay.

“Wanna come inside?” Sylvia continued. “There’s a brand new bag of chocolate chips just begging to become cookies.” With an exaggerated sigh of relief, Carol stepped inside, and both girls laughed as the door closed gently behind them.

Read the following sentence.

“Sylvia tried to ignore the small pang in her midsection as she walked.”

Write an essay analyzing how the quote represents Sylvia’s conflict. Use evidence from the text to support your response.