The Battle of the Bedroom

My older sister, Marta, glares at me from across the room. Her dark brown eyes blaze with anger; she’s ready to burst. I almost say something to set her off, but Dad said if he heard any more noise from our room that we would both be grounded.

Sure, we fight like all sisters do, but the battle lines were redrawn when we moved into our new house a week ago. In our old house, we each had our own bedroom. Now we have to share, and it has led to an all-out war. We still haven’t unpacked a thing because we can’t agree on how to decorate the room. Right now, we’re stuck with cardboard boxes.

Marta wants dark walls, gray curtains, and posters of her favorite bands. I want a mural of ocean creatures against bright blue walls. Our family took a trip to the Gulf of Mexico last year, and I fell in love with the sparkling blue water. I think it would be fun to have a reminder of that.

Marta despises my idea, and I sure don’t like hers, so now we’re stuck in a stalemate.

Dad pops his head into the room. “Lucia, Marta, can we see you in the living room, please?” He and Mom are sitting on the couch. Marta and I sit in chairs across from them.

Dad starts by telling us how disappointed he is, especially about the disrespect we’ve shown them and each other. I squirm in my seat, embarrassed that we’ve been acting so childish.

Mom cuts to the chase and says, “It’s a mystery to us how two bright and reasonable girls can be so inflexible.” She hands us each a spiral notebook and a ballpoint pen. “You both have good ideas. So we’re giving you one hour to come up with a plan...” she looks back and forth between us, “for the other person’s idea. Lucia, you’ll tell us why Marta’s idea is the best, and vice versa.”
“That isn’t fair,” Marta screeches, her shrill voice rising another octave. “Lucia’s idea is childish and awful!”

I leap to defend myself but quickly choke back my words. Our parents’ faces are bleak.

We both storm into our bedroom and resume our positions; she’s on her bed, and I’m across the room on mine. We lock eyes for a few moments before she sighs and slumps against the wall. “So why do you want to do this ocean thing?” she asks in a monotonous voice, acting like she doesn’t care.

“Remember our vacation last year?” I cross my arms and glare at her. “It was so much fun, and we didn’t fight all week, not even when it rained all day and we stayed in the hotel room. It would be nice to have a reminder of that.” I look up, surprised to see the tension draining from her face.

“I didn’t know that it meant so much to you,” she murmurs, sounding almost apologetic. She thinks for a moment, then explains, “This is our only chance, Lucia. We get to decorate once, and you might not want to see starfish every day for the next five years. If we choose a simpler design, we can enjoy it longer.”

I hadn’t considered that before. “The walls don’t have to be blue,” I say quietly, uncrossing my arms. “I like other colors, too.”

“A darker blue could be nice, maybe with white trim?” Marta gives me a shy smile. She mentions that Mom took a lot of photos during that trip, most of them of the ocean. “Maybe we could use those for artwork instead of my old posters,” she offers.

I beam at her. “I would like that a lot.”

Marta scrambles onto my bed and together we brainstorm ideas for our shared living space. I have a sneaking suspicion that this was Mom and Dad’s plan all along, but Marta and I are having such a good time that I’ll let it slide...this time.
A. Reread the passage and answer the questions.

1. What problem does sharing a bedroom create for Marta and Lucia?

_____________________________________________________________________

2. Why do the girls' parents give them each a notebook and a pen?

_____________________________________________________________________

3. What happens when the sisters discuss their ideas with each other?

_____________________________________________________________________

4. What is the theme of the passage?

_____________________________________________________________________

B. Work with a partner. Read the passage aloud. Pay attention to intonation. Stop after one minute. Fill out the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Words Read</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>=</th>
<th>Words Correct Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Read</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Read</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>