

Running Like a Pro

by Aditi Sriram



Everyone told Julien he looked just like his father. The same steady hazel eyes, the same big ears sticking out on either side of his face. "Oh my goodness!" people would say with a gasp. "Aren't you a spitting image of your dad!" When his cello teacher met his father, he said, "What a bold lineage you share." Julien liked that way of putting it, that he didn't just look like his father, but that he and his father shared something more special.

So when Julien's father began training for a marathon, Julien found himself wanting to run as well. He was in sixth grade, and the cross-country team was holding tryouts in a few weeks. He wanted to give it his best shot. His father said, "That's a great idea, son. Running is not only great exercise for the body but for the mind too. When I go for a run, I feel free from all the things I have to do for the rest of the day. I don't think about work or chores. Any worries I have, I leave at the start line, and they only climb back into my head when I've finished my run, by which time I'm so pumped that they no longer feel like worries."

"Is that how you're able to run such long races, Dad?" Julien asked. He was becoming nervous about having to run for so long without stopping.

"It's not a race," his father explained. "It's about starting strong and finishing strong. Here, why don't you and I go for a run every morning before school? Just around the neighborhood. We'll build up your stamina, and we'll also build up your mental energy to get through a run without

feeling anxious about it."

Julien approved of his father's idea, and the next morning he was up bright and early to go for a run, wearing Converse shoes that laced all the way from his toes to his ankle. His father shook his head. "You need shoes that you've tested out, not just any old shoes!" he explained. "Today after school, we'll go to the running store and get you a great pair of sneakers. It's really important to listen to your body, test it out, and get the perfect pair of shoes to complement your running form."

All through the school day, Julien couldn't stop thinking about shoes and running form. His father took great pride in those things, and he would too.

At the store, Julien was amazed to see what all he had to do before he could buy a pair of shoes. It wasn't as simple as knowing his shoe size. No, the sales representative ran Julien through a battery of tests. Her name was Zoe. First, she made him walk up and down the store, barefoot, and observed him carefully. Then, she had Julien step onto a treadmill. It was the first time Julien had stood on a treadmill before. He looked at his father, big hazel eyes meeting big hazel eyes.

"Don't worry about a thing, champ," Zoe said. "This is the easy part."

She turned on the treadmill and told Julien to walk on it as if he were walking down the street. Zoe was right, Julien thought, this is easy. Zoe sped up the treadmill a little, and Julien had to walk more quickly to keep up. She sped it up even more and added an uphill climb, and Julien began jogging. It was still easy; he wasn't breathing hard yet, and knew he could go faster.

"Wow," Zoe said to Julien and his father. "We've got a marathon runner here."

"My dad's the marathon runner," Julien said in between breaths.

"Well, I can tell that you're going to be great at long distance too," Zoe said with a smile. "You *pronate*, which means that you put more stress on the insides of your feet when you run. It's totally normal, don't worry. And now we can find you the perfect pair of shoes to keep your feet strong and your arches supported while you run."

"My son, the pro," Julien's father said, patting him on the back when Julien got off the treadmill.

Father, son, and Zoe spent thirty minutes trying on different pairs of shoes, a rainbow of colors, a series of brands, and settled on a pair of blue sneakers.

"We've done the research," Julien's father said on the drive back home. "Now you're ready to train!"

And Julien agreed, wiggling his toes inside his brand new shoes-the same color and brand as his father's.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What do Julien and his father start doing together?

- A. Julien and his father start playing the cello together.
- B. Julien and his father start doing chores together.
- C. Julien and his father start driving together.
- D. Julien and his father start running together.

2. Julien and his father solve a problem by getting a pair of blue sneakers. What is the problem?

- A. Julien does not have a great pair of sneakers for running.
- B. Julien does not know how to run on a treadmill.
- C. Julien is having trouble concentrating at school.
- D. Julien does not have enough money to buy his own cello.

3. Julien and his father have a lot in common.

What evidence from the story supports this statement?

- A. Julien is nervous about running for a long time without stopping.
- B. When Julien goes to the store, the sales representative has him run on a treadmill.
- C. Julien spends thirty minutes trying on different pairs of shoes at the store.
- D. Julien and his father have hazel eyes and are interested in running.

4. Why does Zoe say, "We've got a marathon runner here" when Julien is on the treadmill?

- A. Zoe wants Julien to buy a pair of blue sneakers.
- B. Zoe sees that Julien is good at running.
- C. Zoe has gotten Julien confused with his father.
- D. Zoe wants Julien to walk barefoot up and down the store.

5. What is a theme of this story?

- A. the difference between starting strong and finishing strong
- B. the differences between a husband and a wife
- C. the similarities between playing the cello and running
- D. the similarities between a father and his son

6. Read the following sentences: "So when Julien's father began training for a marathon, Julien found himself wanting to run as well."

What does **marathon** mean in the sentence above?

- A. an activity someone has to do
- B. a cooking contest
- C. a very long run
- D. a television show

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

Julien and his father have a lot in common; _____, their shoes are the same color and brand.

- A. even though
- B. after
- C. for instance
- D. in summary

8. Name three things that Julien and his father have in common.

9. Why does Julien like his cello teacher's statement, "What a bold lineage you share"?

10. How does Julien feel about his similarities to his father? Support your answer with evidence from the story.