"Stay Out of the Basement"

by R.L.Stine

Task 1:
What do these words mean? Connect the words to what you think might be their meaning.

A. Moist	A. a line that marks the outer limits of an object
B. Fern	B. to change to be more effective
C. Adjust	C. very great in size
D. enormous	D. by a very little, hardly
E. To scold	E. Slightly wet, damp, humid
F. barely	F. A low plant, with with wide leaves that unfurl as they mature
G. Outline	G. to find fault noisily or angrily

Task 2:
Please read the text below and answer the questions.

"Yuck! It's so hot in here!"
As they stepped away from the stairs, the air became unbearably hot and thick. Margaret gasped. The sudden change in temperature was suffocating.
"It's so moist," Diane said. "Good for your hair and skin."
"We studied the rain forest in school," Casey said. "Maybe Dad's building a rain forest."
"Maybe," Margaret said uncertainly.
Why did she feel so strange? Was it just because they were invading their father's domain? Doing something he had told them not to do?
She held back, gazing in both directions. The basement was divided into two large, rectangular rooms. To the left, an unfinished rec room stood in darkness. She could barely make out the outlines of the Ping-Pong table in the center of the room. The workroom to the right was brightly lit, so bright they had to blink and wait for their eyes to adjust. Beams of white light poured down from large halogen lamps on tracks in the ceiling.

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“Wow! Look!” Casey cried, his eyes wide as he stepped excitedly toward the light.

Reaching up toward the lights were shiny, tall plants, dozens of them, thick-stalked and broad-leafed, planted close together in an enormous, low trough of dark soil.

“It’s like a jungle!” Margaret exclaimed, following Casey into the white glare.

The plants, in fact, resembled jungle plants—leafy vines and tall, treelike plants with long, slender tendrils, fragile-looking ferns, plants with gnarled, cream-colored roots poking up like bony knees from the soil.

“It’s like a swamp or something,” Diane said. “Did your father really grow these things in just five or six weeks?”

“Yeah. I’m pretty sure,” Margaret replied, staring at the enormous red tomatoes on a slender, yellow stalk.

“Ooh. Feel this one,” Diane said.

Margaret glanced over to find her friend rubbing her hand over a large, flat leaf the shape of a teardrop. “Diane—we shouldn’t touch—”

“I know, I know,” Diane said, not letting go of the leaf. “But just rub your hand on it.”

Margaret reluctantly obeyed. “It doesn’t feel like a leaf,” she said as Diane moved over to examine a large fern. “It’s so smooth. Like glass.”

The three of them stood under the bright, white lights, examining the plants for several minutes, touching the thick stalks, running their hands over the smooth, warm leaves, surprised by the enormous size of the fruits some of the plants had produced.

“It’s too hot down here,” Casey complained. He pulled his T-shirt off over his head and dropped it onto the floor.

“What a bod!” Diane teased him.

He stuck out his tongue at her. Then his pale blue eyes grew wide and he seemed to freeze in surprise. “Hey!”

“Casey—what’s the matter?” Margaret asked, hurrying over to him.

“This one—” He pointed to a tall, treelike plant. “It’s breathing!”

Diane laughed.

But Margaret heard it, too. She grabbed Casey’s bare shoulder and listened. Yes. She could hear breathing sounds, and they seemed to be coming from the tall, leafy tree.

“What’s your problem?” Diane asked, seeing the amazed expressions on Casey’s and Margaret’s faces.

“Casey’s right,” Margaret said softly, listening to the steady, rhythmic sound. “You can hear it breathing.”

Diane rolled her eyes. “Maybe it has a cold. Maybe its vine is stuffed up.” She laughed at her own joke, but her two companions didn’t join in. “I don’t hear it.” She moved closer.

All three of them listened.

Silence.

“It—stopped,” Margaret said.

“Stop it, you two,” Diane scolded. “You’re not going to scare me.”

“No. Really,” Margaret protested.

“Hey—look at this!” Casey had already moved on to something else. He was standing in front of a tall glass case that stood on the other side of the plants. It

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looked a little like a phone booth, with a shelf inside about shoulder-high, and dozens of wires attached to the back and sides.
Margaret's eyes followed the wires to a similar glass booth a few feet away.
Some kind of electrical generator stood between the two booths and appeared to be connected to both of them.
"What could that be?" Diane asked, hurrying over to Casey.
"Don't touch it," Margaret warned, giving the breathing plant one final glance, then joining the others.
But Casey reached out to the glass door on the front of the booth. "I just want to see if this opens," he said.
He grabbed the glass—and his eyes went wide with shock.

1. Where are the kids in the story? Describe this place

2. What kinds of plants did the kids see?

3. Based on what you've read, how would you describe Margaret and Diane?

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4. What is the overall feeling you get from this text? What kind of story is this?Funny? Sad? Something else? Why?

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