The Phone Call

Paul looked out the window and sighed. The driveway was still empty and it was getting dark. He checked the clock and sighed again, deeper this time. His dad had said that he would pick him up by 5:30, but it was almost seven and Paul hadn't heard a word from him. He walked up the stairs to his room and put away his baseball glove. Paul figured that even if his Dad did miraculously show, it wouldn't be much fun playing catch in the dark. Paul sat down on the couch and tried to do some of his reading homework, but he couldn't get his dad off of his mind.

The phone rang at about 8:00 and Paul let it go to the machine. It was his Dad: ***"Hey Paul, I'm so sorry that I couldn't make it tonight. I had to finish up a big project at work. Maybe we can catch a baseball game this weekend. Oh wait, this weekend's no good. How about next weekend? That should work. You and I are going to the stadium for sure, Paulie. I hope all is well..."***

Paul listened to the machine in disgust. He knew that his dad had a job and a life, but he couldn't understand why he was always flaking out on him. Paul thought to himself: *Couldn't someone else get one of these bad news speeches once in a while? Why does it always have to be me?* Paul crashed on the couch with his book opened to the first page and fell asleep.

The next day at school, Paul didn't turn in his math or science homework and he failed a pop quiz in reading class. Paul's homeroom teacher, Mr. Mathews, noticed Paul's uncharacteristically poor performance and asked him to stay after class. Paul sort of murmured a response that sounded like "Ok." When the bell rang, the other children filed out of class. Paul huffed and waited with his head on his desk. Mr. Matthews pulled up a chair next to him.

"What's up, Paul? You're not doing your homework, you're not studying for tests, and this isn't like you. Something must be bothering you. What is it?" Paul didn't want to tell him. He knew that if he started talking a flood of emotions would pour out of him. He just wanted to be alone with his pain, so he sat there quietly, not even looking at Mr. Matthews. "Well Paul, if you don't want to talk, I will. I know that something's bothering you and you've got to get it out. You don't need to tell me, but you need to tell someone or this thing is going to eat

LIVEWORKSHEETS

you up. Paul, you've got to feel your best to do your best. The sooner you get this thing off of your chest, the sooner you can heal."

As Paul walked home from school, he reflected on the things the Mr. Matthews had told him. He knew that he hadn't been himself recently. Maybe he stopped doing his work because he was looking for attention from his father. He hadn't really thought about it too much up until now, but as he walked home that night he realized that he wasn't just letting his dad spoil his plans: he was letting him spoil his life. Paul figured that Mr. Matthews was right. He couldn't do his best until he felt his best. He decided to take his advice and talk to someone about it.

That night when Paul got home from school, he called his Dad. The call went to voicemail after ringing seven or eight times. Paul had heard his Dad's answering machine message more times than he cared to remember, but this time things were different. When it ended, he would say what he really felt. When the phone beeped, Paul began talking: ***"Dad, it's Paul. I can't go to the stadium with you next weekend. I've got a lot of homework to catch up on. Also, I don't really want to spend another day looking out the window and waiting. When you break plans with me, Dad, it hurts me, and I'm sick of getting hurt. It's not too late to rebuild our relationship, but we're going to have to start small. Maybe you can help me with my homework sometime or something. Dad, I love you, but that's how I feel."***

As Paul ended the call, he felt as though a tremendous burden had been lifted off of his shoulders. He didn't know whether his dad would change. He didn't even think that he would, but it didn't matter. Paul had changed. He had expressed his feelings to the right person, rather than just bottling them up inside of himself and he had a clear head as he worked though his assignments that night.

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Use the chart to record the important details from the story.

CHARACTERS	SETTING
PLOT	

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