**L.1 Better Me**

***Manisha could hear her heart beating like a drum. Taking her position at the starting line, she murmured to herself, “ I hope I have trained enough.” She had never run a three-kilometer cross-country race with so many competitors. Her friend, Zeenat, heard her talking to herself. She comforted Manisha, “Stop worrying! I know you’ll win.”***

***Manisha was all nerves. She felt the burden of everyone’s hopes and expectations. She could not bear 1to wait at the starting line any longer. She could not help but think about how her brother had coached and instructed her. He had run and sprinted with her, encouraging and advising her for weeks before the race. Thinking of her brother gave her courage and she looked at the track sprawled in front of her with newfound determination.***

***Just in time, the announcer blared on the megaphone, “All participants, on your marks.” Bang! The starter’s gun went off and the runners sprang away from the starting line.***

***After about 500 meters, the flat track changed to a steep upward slope lined by pine trees. Manisha was looking forward to this part, since she had especially trained for it. Once while practicing running up a slope, she sprained her ankle because she had pushed too hard. She had learnt from her injury and understood that different problems need different solutions. She learnt that running up a slope needed different preparation from running on a flat track.***

***After running for 1.5 kilometers, Manisha reached the top. She was in first place. As she looked down from the top, she could see a gentle slope that led straight to the flat end of the track. She could hear her brother and friends calling her name and encouraging her.***

***She got down the slope faster than she had climbed it. Still in the lead, she saw a race marshal spreading his arms and waving a flag. He called out, “Off track. You must get back on the track.”***

***Manisha suddenly realized that she had gone off the track. She was dismayed; this could cost her entire race. Nevertheless, she did not stop. She turned around and got back on the correct track. Her brother had stressed the importance of respecting marshal. She did not argue with him and joined and other runners.***

***All the runners were on the same track, and Manisha was not in the lead now. There were five other racers ahead of her.***

***This was the last stretch of the race. Manisha was sure she could not win now. But she did not slow down. Instead, she pushed harder. Eager to win the race, she charged forward. She did now even realize when she overtook four racers.***