Recipe for Disaster
A Reading A–Z Level R Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,049

Connections

Writing and Art
The author uses similes to compare two objects using the word *like*. For example, “the camera crew circled like hawks” and “moving like a small cyclone.” Write your own simile and draw a picture of it.

Math
Mollie wants to make twenty-four croissants. So far she has made a quarter of them. How many more croissants does she need to make?

Recipe for Disaster
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What do Sofia and Mollie learn in the story?

**Words to Know**
- competition
- disaster
- dough
- eliminated
- frantically
- ingredients
- recipe
- rounds
- station

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Level R Leveled Book
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**Focus Question**
What do Sofia and Mollie learn in the story?
Sofia was no stranger to baking competitions. Her pies always placed first at the state fair, and her bedroom walls were covered with blue ribbons. She had never experienced anything like the National Junior Baking Contest before, though.

The contest was televised, which meant the studio kitchen was full of hot lights, and a camera crew circled like hawks. There were five bakers competing and three rounds of challenges. First, one contestant would be eliminated, then two, before the last two bakers battled for the championship. Sofia could feel sweat dripping down her face.

There was no time to practice, either. Not until the clock started ticking did Sofia discover she had to bake twenty croissants in just three hours. Sofia had never made a croissant in her life! The judges had provided a list of ingredients, but Sofia had to figure out the rest on her own.

“Thirty minutes left!” the TV host cried. Sofia carefully shaped her dough and arranged the croissants evenly on a baking tray. She slid the tray into the oven and set the timer for fifteen minutes.
While she waited, she looked around at the other bakers. Mollie, the girl at the station next to Sofia’s, was still frantically rolling her dough into shape. She’d gotten flour everywhere, even in her ears! Her apron was splattered with pastry, and her station was crowded with dirty bowls. Was that cinnamon Sofia saw all over the floor? That hadn’t even been on the ingredients list!

At least I don’t have to worry about her, Sofia thought. There’s no way she will make it to the next round.

At the end of the round, the judges tasted Mollie’s croissants first. “These are delicious!” the first judge crowed.

“The cinnamon is an inspired touch,” the second judge agreed.

“You were the last one to finish,” the third judge noted, looking pointedly at Mollie’s messy station. “Perhaps try to be a bit more organized next time.”

“I can’t make any promises!” Mollie laughed. She didn’t seem to mind the criticism at all.
Next, the judges tasted Sofia’s croissants.

“They’re a bit underdone, dear,” said the first judge as she took a bite of Sofia’s croissant.

“Yes, you prepared and shaped the dough perfectly, but these could have used a few more minutes in the oven,” the second judge agreed.

The third judge tore apart a croissant to show Sofia where the dough was still raw.

Sofia felt her face flush, and she blinked back tears. How had she not noticed that the croissants were raw? She knew she was a better baker than that.

The boy at the station behind Sofia’s hadn’t made his dough correctly, and his croissants were burned, so he was eliminated. Sofia felt bad for him, but she was relieved that she was moving on to round two. This was her chance to prove her skills.

“For this round, you must work in pairs to bake ten mini cheesecakes,” the TV host announced. “Mollie and Sofia will be the first team, and . . .”
Sofia hardly heard the rest of the instructions. This is going to be a disaster, she thought. Judging by the look on Mollie’s face, she felt the same way.

The host started the clock. This time, Sofia knew exactly what she was doing. She reached for the cream cheese at the same time Mollie picked up a basket of eggs. Their arms crossed, the basket tipped, and suddenly eggs went flying everywhere. Two production assistants swooped in to wipe up the mess and bring them new eggs.

“Look what you did!” Sofia huffed, trying not to slip on the wet floor. “Let me take the lead. Cheesecake is a specialty of mine.”

“I’ve made cheesecake before,” Mollie snapped. She picked up the sugar and started pouring it straight into the mixing bowl.

“Wait! You have to measure it!” Sofia shouted. “Why don’t you just smash graham crackers for the crust instead?”

“Why don’t you do it?” Mollie countered. “It might help you chill out a little!”
The baking came to a halt as the girls glared at each other, hands on their hips. Suddenly, Sofia remembered that the cameras were capturing everything.

“Look, we’re wasting time,” she said, reaching for the graham crackers. “I’ll smash. You mix.”

Mollie reached for an egg.

“Not yet!” Sofia yelped. “You have to mix the cream cheese and sugar first and then add the eggs. That way you won’t overbeat them, and the cheesecakes will be light and fluffy.”

“Okay, okay, fine,” Mollie said, putting down the egg. “I’ll follow your lead on the steps if you let me handle the toppings.”

“Deal,” Sofia said, and as it turned out, Mollie was right, too. Smashing the graham crackers felt pretty good!
Next, Sofia pressed the crust into the tins while Mollie started a sauce with berries and lemons. Despite moving like a small cyclone, Mollie was clearly an expert baker. Sofia would have never thought to add lemon, but she had to admit Mollie’s version tasted better than the sauce she usually made.

Sofia explained the next steps while Mollie spooned the batter into the tins. “Now we need to fill a pan with water,” she said. “Then we put the tins in the water and put the pan in the oven. That will keep the temperature steady, and the steam will help the cakes rise evenly.”

She opened all the cabinets—no pans to be found. “Oh no!” Sofia moaned. She was already imagining the disappointed looks on the judges’ faces when she served them dry, cracked cheesecake.

“Relax,” Mollie said. “The cheesecakes just need to bake in water. It doesn’t matter what shape the containers are.”

She grabbed a large pot. “This should do the trick!”

Sofia wasn’t convinced, but she helped Mollie fill the container before carefully sliding the cheesecakes into the oven.
An hour later, the judges tasted the cheesecakes. Then, the host announced the results.

“The bakers who will compete for the win are . . . Sofia and Mollie!”

The girls looked at each other and smiled.

“Good luck,” said Mollie. “Maybe I’ll try following a recipe this time.”

Sofia grinned. “Maybe I’ll try to relax.”

The girls went to their separate stations and prepared to bake.