Room at the Table

Read how family experience shapes a story's language and theme.

9.CL.3 "Analyze how an author's cultural perspective influences style, language, and themes."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two places where the narrator's family experience shapes word choice, circle each use of a repeated phrase, and number one sentence that reveals the story's theme.

One More Chair

1 At our apartment building's winter potluck, I carried a folding chair through the lobby while my lola set out a plate of sliced mangoes. "One more chair," she said, though every table looked full. In our Filipino American family, lola means grandmother, but she rarely stopped at being only ours. She waved in the new tenant from upstairs and a neighbor whose oven had broken. I had planned to sit with my friends. Instead, I opened the chair beside the mangoes, and the new tenant sat down, still wearing his work badge.

2 At school, our principal called the potluck "my achievement" because I had organized the sign-up sheet. The words sounded too small for what I had seen. Mrs. Cruz had lent her rice cooker. Omar had carried bowls from the third floor. My friends had taped paper snowflakes to the windows after finishing their homework. I kept thinking, one more chair, one more pair of hands. At home, lola said, "Kain," which means "Eat." She said it to anyone who paused at our door, and somehow the word made a stranger sound like a guest.

3 When I wrote about the night for the school paper, I crossed out "I brought everyone together." I wrote "We made room" instead. My family has taught me to hear an invitation inside a busy room, not only to notice who is already there. That lesson belongs to our household, not to every Filipino American home. Still, it shapes the story I tell: I name the people who worked, repeat lola's call, and leave the chair open at the end. The new tenant returned it the next morning. He asked if he could bring one next time.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the narrator keep the words “lola” and “Kain” in the story? How does each word help show the family’s way of welcoming people?

2. How does repeating “one more chair” shape the way you understand the narrator’s family perspective?

3. The narrator names Mrs. Cruz, Omar, and the friends in separate sentences. How does this writing choice support the story’s theme?

4. Why does the narrator change “I brought everyone together” to “We made room”? What does that change reveal about the narrator’s perspective?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 105 word editorial note for the school paper. Give the story a new closing sentence that fits this narrator’s family perspective, then explain how your sentence builds on a language or style choice in the passage and strengthens its theme. Do not copy a sentence from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Room at the Table

GRADE 9 · 9.CL.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two places where the narrator's family experience shapes word choice, circle each use of a repeated phrase, and number one sentence that reveals the story's theme. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the narrator keep the words "lola" and "Kain" in the story? How does each word help show the family's way of welcoming people?	**"Lola" identifies the grandmother whose care extends to neighbors. "Kain" keeps her invitation in her own words, showing how she makes someone at the door feel like a guest.**
2	How does repeating "one more chair" shape the way you understand the narrator's family perspective?	**The repetition turns the chair into a sign of making room for others, a practice the narrator has learned from the family.**
3	The narrator names Mrs. Cruz, Omar, and the friends in separate sentences. How does this writing choice support the story's theme?	**The separate sentences give each person's work attention. Together, the details show that the potluck depended on shared effort, not one person's achievement.**
4	Why does the narrator change "I brought everyone together" to "We made room"? What does that change reveal about the narrator's perspective?	**"We" credits everyone who helped, while "made room" focuses on welcoming others. The change reflects the narrator's family-taught belief in shared responsibility.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

"Next time, we can set a place before anyone knocks." This closing line uses "we," echoing the narrator's choice to replace "I" with "we" in the school paper. The phrase "set a place" also extends the chair image without copying the repeated words. Instead of treating the tenant's visit as a one-time act of kindness, the line makes welcome a habit that the whole household can practice. It fits the narrator's experience of lola inviting neighbors in and emphasizes shared responsibility over individual credit.

Accept different text-based interpretations that connect the narrator's specific family experience to a choice in language or style and its effect on the theme. For Part 3, the new sentence must be original and fit the perspective established in the passage.