Voices at Riverside

Trace how a character's choices develop a theme.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2 "Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show Maya's change, circle two setting details that affect the conflict, and number three plot events that build a possible theme.

The Riverside Branch

1 On the first Monday after winter break, Maya arrived early at the old Riverside library carrying a box of returned books. The building's narrow windows let in little light, and the heater clicked without warming the reading room. Maya had volunteered to sort donations, but she mostly wanted a quiet place to avoid the crowded lunchroom at school. While stacking mysteries, she noticed a handwritten sign: “Library board meeting Friday. Proposal: close the branch by summer.”

2 At first, Maya folded the sign and put it under the desk. Speaking at a meeting sounded worse than eating alone, and she told herself that adults would handle the problem. On Wednesday, however, Mr. Ortiz, the librarian, showed her a notebook filled with children’s requests for homework help, job applications, and books in Spanish. He said the board had not received many comments from students. Maya copied the meeting date onto the notebook's last page and began asking classmates what the library meant to them.

3 Friday's meeting took place in the library's basement, where rain tapped the low windows and folding chairs faced a long table. Maya's hands shook when Mr. Ortiz called her name. Instead of reading a prepared speech, she placed the classmates' notes on the table and described how the branch gave students a place to work when home was noisy. Other students then spoke. The board delayed the closure vote and formed a committee to seek funding. As chairs scraped the floor afterward, Maya asked Mr. Ortiz how she could help organize the notes.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. State one theme of the story. Cite two plot events that develop this theme.

2. How does Maya change from the beginning to the end of the story? Explain how her change supports the theme.

3. How do the library setting and the meeting location increase the conflict or influence Maya's actions? Use two details from the passage.

4. Write a three-sentence objective summary of the story. Include the conflict, Maya's main action, and the outcome.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write 6 to 8 sentences that state a theme and explain how Maya's choices, the library setting, and three plot events develop it. Use specific evidence, and do not retell every detail.

ANSWER KEY

Voices at Riverside

GRADE 8 · RL.8.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show Maya's change, circle two setting details that affect the conflict, and number three plot events that build a possible theme. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	State one theme of the story. Cite two plot events that develop this theme.	**One theme is that people can protect an important community resource by acting even when they are afraid. Maya gathers classmates' comments after learning about the library's uses, and she presents their notes at the board meeting.**
2	How does Maya change from the beginning to the end of the story? Explain how her change supports the theme.	**Maya changes from avoiding the problem and expecting adults to handle it to speaking at the meeting and offering to help afterward. Her change supports the idea that taking action can help a community respond to a problem.**
3	How do the library setting and the meeting location increase the conflict or influence Maya's actions? Use two details from the passage.	**The dim, cold library and the closure notice show that the branch is at risk. In the basement meeting, Maya must speak before the board at a long table, which makes her nervous but gives her a place to share the students' notes.**
4	Write a three-sentence objective summary of the story. Include the conflict, Maya's main action, and the outcome.	**Maya learns that the Riverside library may close but initially avoids speaking about it. After Mr. Ortiz shows her community requests, she gathers classmates' comments and presents them at the board meeting. The board delays its vote and forms a funding committee, and Maya offers to help organize the notes.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A theme of the story is that people can protect an important community resource by acting even when they feel afraid. Maya begins by hiding the closure sign because she expects adults to solve the problem. The dim, cold library and the notice about closing show that the branch is vulnerable. After Mr. Ortiz shows her requests from local children, Maya gathers classmates' views instead of remaining silent. In the basement meeting, she uses their notes to explain why students need the library, and other students join her. The delayed vote and Maya's offer to organize the notes show that her action has begun to create a response.

Accept equivalent themes about courage, community action, or speaking up, as long as students support them with accurate events. Objective summaries should include the conflict, major actions, and outcome without opinions or unnecessary minor details.