Old Rooms, New Light

Track how contrasting details build themes in literary prose.

ELA.10.R.1 "Reading Prose and Poetry"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show an older tradition, and circle two details that show a new approach. Draw an arrow between one underlined detail and one circled detail that work together to develop a theme.

The East Wing

1. At dawn, Mara unlocked the town library with the temporary key the mayor had given her. Contractors would arrive at noon to remove the building's old card catalog and seal the east wing for renovations. Mara had argued for a digital archive at the council meeting, yet she paused beside the walnut drawers, where generations of fingerprints had polished the brass handles. Inside one drawer, she found a note from her grandfather, a former librarian: "A library changes so people can keep finding one another." Mara copied the note into her notebook, then opened every curtain.

2. By midmorning, neighbor Mr. Bell carried in a box of handwritten recipes collected during the town's flood fifty years earlier. He asked Mara to save them before the workers came. She explained that the archive scanner could preserve each page and make the recipes available beyond their street. Mr. Bell frowned. "A screen cannot smell cinnamon," he said. Mara did not dismiss him. She placed one recipe on the scanner, then asked him to read its margin notes aloud. As his voice filled the quiet room, two teenagers stopped to listen, and Mara added their names to a volunteer list.

3. At noon, the contractors waited by the entrance, but Mara met them with a revised plan. The catalog drawers would leave the main room, not the library. Volunteers would clean them, and the smallest drawers would become a display beside the new computers. Mr. Bell donated the recipe box on the condition that the display include a place for visitors to add family stories. Mara agreed, although the extra work meant she would spend her Saturday labeling files. When the first computer started, its blue light reflected in the polished brass handles. Mara handed Mr. Bell a printed copy of his favorite recipe.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does Mara's grandfather's note suggest about change, and how does Mara respond to the note?

2. How do Mr. Bell's and Mara's views of preserving the recipes differ at first?

3. How do the teenagers who stop to listen help develop the idea that a library connects people?

4. Identify two themes in the passage. Explain how the final paragraph develops both themes.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence analysis of how a repeated object or image contributes to one theme in the passage. Refer to two different moments in the story.

ANSWER KEY

Old Rooms, New Light

GRADE 10 · ELA.10.R.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show an older tradition, and circle two details that show a new approach. Draw an arrow between one underlined detail and one circled detail that work together to develop a theme. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Mara's grandfather's note suggest about change, and how does Mara respond to the note?	**The note suggests that change can help people remain connected. Mara copies it and begins to treat the old library materials as worth preserving.**
2	How do Mr. Bell's and Mara's views of preserving the recipes differ at first?	**Mr. Bell values the recipes as physical objects with sensory and personal meaning, while Mara values digital preservation because it can protect and share them more widely.**
3	How do the teenagers who stop to listen help develop the idea that a library connects people?	**Their interest shows that Mr. Bell's memories can reach a younger generation. Mara's volunteer list turns that shared interest into community action.**
4	Identify two themes in the passage. Explain how the final paragraph develops both themes.	**One theme is that progress and tradition can coexist, shown by the old drawers displayed beside new computers. Another is that communities preserve memories together, shown by the visitors' story space and the volunteers' work.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Throughout the story, the card catalog represents a connection between memory and change. Mara first notices the worn handles and her grandfather's note, which make the drawers seem valuable rather than outdated. In the final paragraph, blue computer light reflects on the brass handles, showing that the library can honor its past while serving new needs.

Accept equivalent theme statements supported by accurate details from the passage. For the open response, accept any repeated object or image, such as the drawers, recipes, light, or library, if the student explains its connection to a theme using two moments.