What We Carry

Track a universal theme as settings, eras, and characters change.

ELA.11.R.1.2 "Track and analyze universal themes in literary texts from different times and places."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail in each paragraph that shows what a character chooses to carry, save, or share during change. Number the three details 1 through 3 to track a repeated idea about home.

What We Carry

1 In 1936, dust pushed against the windows of Rosa Alvarez's farmhouse near Boise City, Oklahoma, until noon looked like evening. Her father said the family would leave before the next storm buried the road. Rosa did not argue. She filled a coffee tin with the pinto beans her grandmother had saved from the previous harvest and tucked it inside her coat. On the truck bed, her brother laughed at the dented tin. Rosa held it steady through the jolting miles. "A field can come back," she told him, though she could not know when.

2 In 1940, during air raids over London, eleven-year-old Daniel Price slept with his neighbors in the Underground station at Holborn. The platform smelled of damp wool and coal smoke. Each evening, Daniel's mother unfolded a creased map of the city and asked him to name the streets that led home. When a bomb shattered the bakery above their flat, Daniel wanted to throw the map away. It seemed to point only toward ruins. His mother smoothed its torn edge and traced the route to the station. "Home is also the people who remember the way," she said. Daniel began teaching the younger children the street names.

3 In 2024, Nia Okafor watched movers carry boxes from her family's apartment in Lagos to a smaller flat across the city. Her mother had accepted a job near the new place, and Nia would leave the courtyard where neighbors traded stories after supper. Before the final ride, Nia copied the names of every neighbor into a blue notebook, beside a recipe, a phone number, or a remembered joke. At the new building, she introduced herself door to door and invited people to share one useful story. By month's end, the notebook held new handwriting, but none of the old names had vanished.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. For each paragraph, identify the disruption the character faces and the object or practice the character uses to respond.

2. State one universal theme developed across the three paragraphs. Support your theme with details from at least two paragraphs.

3. How does Daniel's paragraph broaden the idea of home introduced in Rosa's paragraph?

4. Explain how Nia's notebook both continues and changes the repeated idea about home.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a literary text you have read that is set in a different time or place from one paragraph in "What We Carry." Write exactly four sentences that identify a universal theme shared by both texts, use one relevant detail from each text, and explain how the settings shape the characters' responses.

ANSWER KEY

What We Carry

GRADE 11 · ELA.11.R.1.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail in each paragraph that shows what a character chooses to carry, save, or share during change. Number the three details 1 through 3 to track a repeated idea about home. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	For each paragraph, identify the disruption the character faces and the object or practice the character uses to respond.	**Rosa's family must leave its Dust Bowl farm, and she carries saved beans. Daniel faces air raids and damage near his home, and he learns and teaches street names from a map. Nia moves to a new neighborhood, and she records and shares neighbors' names and stories.**
2	State one universal theme developed across the three paragraphs. Support your theme with details from at least two paragraphs.	**A universal theme is that people preserve a sense of home during change by carrying memories, traditions, and connections with them. Rosa saves seeds, Daniel and his mother preserve the city's street names, and Nia saves neighbors' stories in her notebook.**
3	How does Daniel's paragraph broaden the idea of home introduced in Rosa's paragraph?	**Rosa connects home to land and the hope that a field can recover. Daniel's mother expands home to include people who remember places together, even when buildings are damaged.**
4	Explain how Nia's notebook both continues and changes the repeated idea about home.	**Like Rosa's tin and Daniel's map, the notebook preserves what might be lost. Unlike the earlier objects, it also gathers new stories, showing that home can grow through new relationships.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The passage and Homer's Odyssey develop the universal theme that people preserve hope by holding onto a vision of home during upheaval. In the 1940 London scene, Daniel's mother keeps using the torn map, and Daniel teaches street names in the Underground station. In The Odyssey, set in the ancient Mediterranean world, Odysseus refuses Calypso's offer of immortality because he wants to return to Ithaca. London's bomb shelters turn home into a shared memory, while Odysseus's long sea journey makes home a personal destination that guides his endurance.

Accept other well-supported universal themes, such as resilience, memory, or community, if students connect them to details across the paragraphs. For the open response, accept any appropriate literary text and accurate comparison that includes a shared theme, evidence from both works, and analysis of setting.