Roots of Repair

Trace how a story develops a universal message through choices and consequences.

ELA.9.R.1.2 "Analyze universal themes and their development throughout a literary text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details in each paragraph that show Mara's choices or the effects of her choices. Number 1, 2, and 3 beside the details that best show how the text's message grows from beginning to end.

The Garden Crew

1 On Monday, Mara volunteered to paint the faded bench beside the school garden. She wanted her name on the volunteer board, not the dirty work. When a soccer ball rolled near her, she set her paint tray on the pavement. The wind lifted a corner of the tarp, and blue paint spilled across a row of young bean plants. Mara looked at the crushed leaves, then at the empty walkway. She wiped paint from her hands and told herself that the gardener would probably blame the wind when she arrived tomorrow.

2 At lunch, Mara passed the garden again. Mr. Chen, the science teacher, knelt beside the plants with a small shovel. “These beans were for Friday’s soil test,” he said to no one in particular. Mara felt the wet blue stain on her sleeve. She almost kept walking, but then she saw a first-year student carrying a tray carefully around the damaged row. Mara turned back. She told Mr. Chen what happened and offered to replace the plants, even though she would miss soccer practice. He handed her a shovel and said, “Start with the roots.”

3 For the next three afternoons, Mara worked in the garden. She loosened soil, set new seedlings in place, and carried water from the outdoor spigot. The soccer team practiced within sight of the fence, and each whistle made her want to leave. On Thursday, two teammates came over with gloves. They had heard what happened and asked to help. By Friday, green shoots stood in the repaired row. Mara crossed her name off the volunteer board and wrote, “Garden crew,” beneath it so every helper could sign beside it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What universal theme does the story develop? Support your answer with two details from the passage.

2. How does Mara's thinking in paragraph 1 introduce a conflict with the theme? Use one detail from the paragraph.

3. Explain how Mara's decision in paragraph 2 develops the theme from the beginning of the story.

4. How does the final paragraph broaden the theme beyond Mara herself? Use evidence from the paragraph.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write three sentences analyzing a different universal theme in the story. Use details from at least two paragraphs, and explain how the theme develops.

ANSWER KEY # Roots of Repair

GRADE 9 · ELA.9.R.1.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details in each paragraph that show Mara's choices or the effects of her choices. Number 1, 2, and 3 beside the details that best show how the text's message grows from beginning to end. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What universal theme does the story develop? Support your answer with two details from the passage.	**A universal theme is that accepting responsibility for harm can lead to repair. Mara admits the spill to Mr. Chen, then works for several afternoons to replace the damaged plants.**
2	How does Mara's thinking in paragraph 1 introduce a conflict with the theme? Use one detail from the paragraph.	**Mara first wants to avoid responsibility because she tells herself that the gardener will probably blame the wind.**
3	Explain how Mara's decision in paragraph 2 develops the theme from the beginning of the story.	**Instead of hiding the spill as she considers in paragraph 1, Mara tells Mr. Chen the truth and offers to replace the plants. Her choice begins the process of repairing the damage.**
4	How does the final paragraph broaden the theme beyond Mara herself? Use evidence from the paragraph.	**Mara's responsible action leads others to help. Her teammates bring gloves and join the work, and Mara changes the volunteer board to "Garden crew" so every helper can sign it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A second universal theme is that honest choices can bring people together. Mara first plans to hide the spill, which would leave the garden for someone else to repair. After she admits the truth and begins working, her teammates join her, showing that honesty can turn a private mistake into shared care.

Accept reasonable statements of universal themes when students explain how the theme develops across the story. Responses should use specific details and distinguish Mara's early desire to avoid blame from her later actions.