# Choices Under Pressure

Compare how authors shape one theme through different conflicts and details.

**12.T.T.1.c** "Compare how different authors develop a similar theme, comparing passages within and across texts, providing both reasoning and supportive textual evidence. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline the choice each protagonist makes, then circle one detail that shows pressure, loss, or risk. Number the three paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 so you can compare the authors' methods.

### Three Moments of Decision

1. From "Low Tide," by Anika Reed: At the pier, Mara saw the last ferry pulling from its berth while the storm siren climbed over the harbor. Her father's medicine was aboard, wrapped in a blue scarf on the empty seat she had saved. Then a deckhand shouted that an elderly passenger had fallen below the rail. Mara ran to the ladder instead of waving at the ferry. She held the woman's hand until the deckhand returned, watching the blue scarf shrink into rain. "We will find another way," she told herself, though the water erased the ferry's lights.

2. From "The Ledger," by Tomas Vale: At closing time, Darius discovered that the warehouse account showed a missing crate of batteries. His supervisor quietly offered him a blank form. "Say the shipment arrived," she said, "and no one will lose a job." Outside, the neighborhood clinic's generator coughed through a blackout. Darius pictured the batteries locked behind a false report while patients waited for light. He wrote the true number in the ledger, then called the clinic to warn its director. His supervisor tore up the form, but Darius kept the carbon copy in his pocket as the dark street filled with ambulance sirens.

3. From "Ash Line," by Iris Morrow: At sunrise, Ren carried his camera to the ridge, hoping to photograph the first light on the canyon and complete his fellowship portfolio. Instead, he found a thin column of smoke lifting beyond the trailhead. The ranger station was two miles downhill, and a group of campers was climbing toward the smoke. Ren set his camera on a rock and ran after them. By the time he turned the campers around, ash had settled over the lens. He did not know whether the photograph would have won anything, but he watched the children descend safely and felt the ridge become ordinary again.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What shared theme do all three authors develop? Support your answer with one detail from two different passages.

2. Compare Mara's choice with Ren's choice. What does each character give up, and how do their choices develop the same theme?

3. Compare Reed's blue scarf image with Morrow's camera and ash-covered lens image. What does each image reveal about the cost of the character's decision?

4. How does Vale develop the theme differently from Reed and Morrow? Use evidence from "The Ledger" and one other passage.

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose two literary works you have read. In exactly four sentences, state a shared theme and compare how the two authors develop it, using one specific moment from each work as evidence.

ANSWER KEY

# Choices Under Pressure

GRADE 12 · 12.T.T.1.c

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the choice each protagonist makes, then circle one detail that shows pressure, loss, or risk. Number the three paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 so you can compare the authors' methods. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What shared theme do all three authors develop? Support your answer with one detail from two different passages. | **A shared theme is that acting responsibly can require personal sacrifice. Mara gives up the ferry carrying her father's medicine to help the fallen passenger, and Ren gives up his photograph to lead campers away from smoke.** |
| 2 | Compare Mara's choice with Ren's choice. What does each character give up, and how do their choices develop the same theme? | **Mara gives up her chance to retrieve her father's medicine, while Ren gives up a possible fellowship photograph. Both characters place another person's safety above an important personal goal.** |
| 3 | Compare Reed's blue scarf image with Morrow's camera and ash-covered lens image. What does each image reveal about the cost of the character's decision? | **The shrinking blue scarf represents Mara's lost chance to get the medicine, while the ash-covered lens represents Ren's lost opportunity to make his photograph. Both images make the sacrifice visible, but Reed emphasizes uncertainty and Morrow emphasizes a damaged ambition.** |
| 4 | How does Vale develop the theme differently from Reed and Morrow? Use evidence from "The Ledger" and one other passage. | **Vale develops the theme through truth-telling under pressure. Darius refuses to falsify the shipment record even after his supervisor warns that jobs could be lost, while Mara and Ren develop the theme through immediate physical acts of rescue.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In Arthur Miller's The Crucible and Sophocles' Antigone, a shared theme is that integrity can demand defiance of unjust authority. Miller develops this through John Proctor, who signs a false confession to save his life but refuses to let Danforth post it publicly and tears it up, protecting his name despite the cost. Sophocles develops the theme through Antigone, who openly buries Polyneices even though Creon has forbidden it. Both authors use a character's dangerous choice, but Miller emphasizes private conscience and public reputation, while Sophocles emphasizes family duty and divine law.

Accept clearly stated themes that fit evidence from at least two passages. For the open response, accept valid text pairings if the student uses exactly four sentences, includes specific evidence from both works, and explains a meaningful similarity and difference in development.