

Hard Times, Two Voices

Compare how two 1933 speakers respond to hardship.

8.T.PM.1.b "Compare and contrast the treatment of a common theme by different writers within a time period. (I)"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details in each poem that reveal hardship or hope, then circle one word or phrase in each poem that shows the speaker's attitude toward the future. Use your marks to compare how the writers treat a shared struggle.

Two 1930s Voices

- ① During the Great Depression, many Americans faced lost jobs, empty cupboards, and uncertain futures. The two original poems below imagine young writers living in 1933. Both speakers notice the strain of daily life, but each chooses different images and a different response. As you read, pay attention to what the speakers value, what they fear, and where they look for strength. The poems are not historical documents, but their setting reflects real conditions of the period.
- ② Ruth Allen, "Morning Window," 1933 Before sunrise, I tie my shoes with string. Mother saves the last flour for supper. Still, a thin gold line climbs over the mill roofs. I carry Father's worn lunch pail to the job office, though he cannot use it today. The pail knocks my knee like a small drum. Step by step, I follow its beat. Somewhere beyond the closed gates, a door will open, and I will be ready.
- ③ Caleb Ortiz, "Brick Street," 1933 The landlord's notice flaps on our door, louder than the wind. On Brick Street, children count cracked windows while men wait beside the relief line. I do not trust the bright posters that promise better days. A promise is paper until hands make it real. Tonight, I will join my neighbors at the council hall. We will bring our notices, our questions, and our voices. If the city has locked every gate, we will build a key together.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 What shared struggle do both writers explore? State the theme in your own words.

2 Compare one image Ruth uses with one image Caleb uses. What does each image show about hardship or hope?

3 How does Ruth's response to hardship differ from Caleb's response? Use one detail from each poem.

4 How does each writer's word choice create a different tone toward the future?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a six-sentence poem or journal entry from a third young person living in 1933 who faces the same struggle in a different way from Ruth and Caleb. Include at least two concrete images, and use your sixth sentence to explain how your speaker's response differs from both writers' responses.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two details in each poem that reveal hardship or hope, then circle one word or phrase in each poem that shows the speaker's attitude toward the future. Use your marks to compare how the writers treat a shared struggle. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What shared struggle do both writers explore? State the theme in your own words.	Both writers explore facing economic hardship during the Great Depression while seeking a better future.
2	Compare one image Ruth uses with one image Caleb uses. What does each image show about hardship or hope?	Ruth's gold line and opening door suggest hope and opportunity. Caleb's landlord notice, cracked windows, and locked gate show harsh conditions and barriers that must be changed.
3	How does Ruth's response to hardship differ from Caleb's response? Use one detail from each poem.	Ruth responds through personal persistence and readiness, carrying the lunch pail to the job office. Caleb responds through collective action, joining neighbors at the council hall.
4	How does each writer's word choice create a different tone toward the future?	Ruth's words such as "gold," "beat," and "open" create a hopeful, determined tone. Caleb's words such as "notice," "cracked," and "locked" create a frustrated but defiant tone.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1933, I keep a notebook beside the kitchen stove. When the coal bucket is empty, I sketch the blue flame we wish could burn. At the library, I trade my drawings for old magazines and learn how other towns have solved hard problems. I cannot open a factory gate, and I cannot force the city to listen. But I can gather ideas, teach my little brother to read, and plan for the day our family needs a new start. Unlike Ruth's patient hope and Caleb's public protest, my speaker responds to hardship by learning and preparing.

Accept theme statements about enduring Depression-era hardship, hope, or working toward a better future. Students may choose different valid details, as long as they accurately compare Ruth's personal determination with Caleb's collective, action-focused response.