A Place to Belong

Compare how three short stories develop a shared theme.

11-12.RC.2 "Compare and contrast the development of similar themes across two or more works of literature, and analyze how they emerge and are shaped and refined by specific details."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle a detail that makes belonging uncertain and underline an action that changes it in each story. Write 1, 2, or 3 beside your marks to track the stories.

Three Stories of Belonging

1. **Story 1: The Roster.** On the first day of debate club, Imani found her name penciled beneath a line labeled "alternates." When the team practiced, she timed speeches from the doorway while the regulars argued at the table. At the tournament, a speaker lost her notes. Imani offered the argument she had been writing in her margins all week. The coach handed her the microphone, but afterward Imani put it back beside the timer. "I can keep time and speak," she said. The next practice, her name appeared on the roster without a line above it.

2. **Story 2: The Corner Table.** For weeks, Mateo ate behind the library, where no one noticed the lunch he packed in a paper bag. One rainy day, a classmate named Lena waved him toward a crowded table. He said he had nothing interesting to tell them. Lena slid her own notebook aside and answered, "You don't need a story to sit down." Mateo stayed quiet through lunch. The following Monday, he noticed a younger student hovering near the doorway and moved his tray to make room. This time he spoke first: "There's a seat here."

3. **Story 3: The Patch.** At the neighborhood quilt show, Sora watched visitors point to the neat squares her grandmother had stitched. Sora's own square held a crooked line of bright orange thread, marking the river she remembered from home. When the organizer suggested replacing it with a matching blue square, Sora took out her needle but did not cut the orange thread. Instead, she stitched a small bridge from her square into the next one. By closing time, two neighbors had added roads leading toward the bridge. Sora left the orange river visible.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the opening details in “The Roster” and “The Corner Table” establish different obstacles to belonging?

2. Compare the actions that first change Imani's and Mateo's situations. What different ideas about belonging do those actions suggest?

3. How do the endings of “The Corner Table” and “The Patch” expand belonging beyond one person? Use a detail from each ending.

4. Compare how the changed roster in Story 1 and the unchanged orange river in Story 3 refine the theme of belonging.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Change the final action in one story. In one paragraph, compare how your new ending and a different original story develop different ideas about belonging, using at least one precise detail from each.

A Place to Belong

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle a detail that makes belonging uncertain and underline an action that changes it in each story. Write 1, 2, or 3 beside your marks to track the stories. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the opening details in "The Roster" and "The Corner Table" establish different obstacles to belonging?	**Imani's name is listed under "alternates," and she practices from the doorway, showing that the club gives her a lesser role. Mateo eats alone behind the library, showing his isolation without an explicit rule excluding him.**
2	Compare the actions that first change Imani's and Mateo's situations. What different ideas about belonging do those actions suggest?	**Imani offers an argument when a speaker loses her notes, then insists she can both time speeches and speak. Lena invites Mateo to sit before he proves anything, suggesting that Imani claims a place while Mateo is offered one freely.**
3	How do the endings of "The Corner Table" and "The Patch" expand belonging beyond one person? Use a detail from each ending.	**Mateo makes room for a younger student, passing on the welcome he received. Neighbors stitch roads toward Sora's bridge, joining her effort to connect her square to theirs.**
4	Compare how the changed roster in Story 1 and the unchanged orange river in Story 3 refine the theme of belonging.	**The roster loses the line separating Imani from the regular team, making her place equal to theirs. Sora keeps her orange river while connecting her square to others, showing that belonging need not erase what makes someone distinct.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In my revised ending to "The Roster," the coach writes Imani's name under "alternates" again, and Imani crosses out the label in front of the team. Her earlier place by the doorway makes this action a public refusal to accept a lesser role. Belonging becomes a claim she must defend, not a gift from the coach. In "The Corner Table," Lena slides her notebook aside before Mateo has done anything to impress anyone. His welcome begins with another person's choice, not his own confrontation.

Accept interpretations that explain how specific details shape each story's version of belonging. For Part 3, the changed action must produce a defensible contrast with a different original story.