Room on the Bench

Trace a theme through a character's choices

RL.6.2 "Analyze how the text reflects the theme by citing textual evidence, using direct quoting and summarizing."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two lines that show how Lena's thinking about help changes. Circle one detail that shows how someone else's needs change the bench.

The New Bench

1 On Saturday, Lena carried a stack of boards to the courtyard near the front gate of her apartment building. The old bench had splintered, and Mr. Ortiz now stood while he waited for the bus. Lena wanted to build a new bench before his birthday. "I can do it myself," she told her brother, who offered to hold the boards. She had drawn a neat plan in her notebook, complete with a shelf for books. By lunchtime, the legs wobbled. Lena tightened each screw until her hands ached, but the bench still rocked.

2 Her brother returned with a level borrowed from upstairs. Lena almost waved him away, then watched a marble roll from one end of the seat to the other. "Maybe you can hold this side," she said. Together they found that one leg was shorter than the others. Mrs. Chen, passing with groceries, offered a scrap of wood that fit under it. Lena hesitated before changing her drawing. She had spent hours on that plan, but a steady bench mattered more than a perfect page.

3 By evening, the bench stood firm, though the book shelf had become a spot for umbrellas. Mr. Ortiz tested the seat and pointed to the narrow space beside him. "Could you leave room for someone else?" he asked. Lena moved a flowerpot so two people could sit comfortably. The next morning, she saw Mr. Ortiz sharing the bench with a neighbor as they waited for the bus. Lena ran her hand over the smooth boards. The bench was not exactly what she had imagined, and that was why it worked.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does Lena believe about building the bench at first? Quote her words, then summarize what happens when she works alone.

2. How does Lena begin to change her mind about help? Quote something she says and summarize what she and her brother discover.

3. What does Lena learn when Mrs. Chen offers wood? Quote a line that shows what matters more to Lena now, and explain how the wood helps.

4. How does the finished bench support a theme about accepting help? Quote a line from the ending and summarize one change to Lena's original plan.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a short paragraph about a different theme: noticing what others need can make a place more welcoming. Quote one detail from the first paragraph and summarize a different event from the last paragraph to support your idea.

ANSWER KEY

Room on the Bench

GRADE 6 · RL.6.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two lines that show how Lena's thinking about help changes. Circle one detail that shows how someone else's needs change the bench. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Lena believe about building the bench at first? Quote her words, then summarize what happens when she works alone.	**Lena says, "I can do it myself." She works until her hands ache, but the bench still rocks.**
2	How does Lena begin to change her mind about help? Quote something she says and summarize what she and her brother discover.	**Lena says, "Maybe you can hold this side." Working together, they discover that one leg is shorter than the others.**
3	What does Lena learn when Mrs. Chen offers wood? Quote a line that shows what matters more to Lena now, and explain how the wood helps.	**The passage says, "a steady bench mattered more than a perfect page." Mrs. Chen's scrap of wood fits under the short leg, so Lena changes her plan to make the bench steady.**
4	How does the finished bench support a theme about accepting help? Quote a line from the ending and summarize one change to Lena's original plan.	**Lena realizes the bench was "not exactly what she had imagined, and that was why it worked." For example, the planned book shelf becomes a spot for umbrellas.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The story shows that noticing what others need can make a place more welcoming. At first, "Mr. Ortiz now stood while he waited for the bus," which gives Lena a reason to build the bench. Later, she moves a flowerpot to make space for two people. Because she pays attention, the bench becomes a place neighbors can share.

Accept other accurate quotations and summaries that support each interpretation. For Your Turn, look for a quotation from paragraph one and a summarized, distinct event from paragraph three.