A Handful of Salt

A fictional village voice during India's 1930 Salt March

RL.9-10.6 "Analyze how authors' perspectives or cultural experiences are reflected in works of world literature from various historical contexts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show how village life shapes the narrator's view of salt. Circle two details that show how British rule affects the family's choices.

What the Sea Leaves Behind

1 In April 1930, our village near Dandi waited for the marchers to reach the sea. Grandmother poured a pinch of salt into the lentils and held the bowl above the fire. "The sea sends us a gift," she said, "and the government sends us a bill." Under British rule, Indians could not freely make salt for their own use; the law protected a government monopoly. I had heard Father call the march a risky spectacle. Yet Grandmother measured each grain as if it were a seed she hoped we would plant someday.

2 When the walkers arrived, their sandals were dusty, and their voices were hoarse from singing. I expected a leader to look like a king, but Gandhi wore plain cloth and stepped onto the sand with everyone else. Father stood beside our doorway, his arms folded. "A handful of salt will not feed us if they close the market," he said. He sold baskets to traders and feared losing their orders. Grandmother answered by handing him a small woven pouch. "You made this," she said. "No officer taught your hands how." Father tucked the pouch into his belt without speaking.

3 At dawn, people went to the shore to gather salt, openly defying the law. I bent down too, though my fingers shook as I lifted a crust of white from the damp ground. It weighed less than the stone I used to keep our door from blowing shut. Behind me, Father called out that the tide was coming in. He did not order me back. I pressed the salt into his pouch, feeling its rough edge through the weave. For the first time, I thought of our door as something that could open from our side.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Grandmother's experience of preparing food shape her view of the salt law? Use a detail from the passage.

2. How does Father's work shape his response to the march? Explain how his view differs from Grandmother's.

3. Why might the writer contrast the narrator's expectation of a king with Gandhi's plain cloth and dusty marchers? Connect this choice to the protest's historical setting.

4. How does the image of the door in the final sentence reflect the narrator's changing view of life under British rule?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a diary entry of 85 to 105 words from Father's perspective on the morning at the shore. Use at least two details from the story, and show how his work and life under British rule create tension in what he believes.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show how village life shapes the narrator's view of salt. Circle two details that show how British rule affects the family's choices. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Grandmother's experience of preparing food shape her view of the salt law? Use a detail from the passage.	**Because she uses salt in the family's daily meals, she sees it as a gift from the sea rather than something the government should control. Her comment about receiving a bill shows her objection to the law.**
2	How does Father's work shape his response to the march? Explain how his view differs from Grandmother's.	**Father sells baskets to traders and fears losing orders if the market closes, so he sees the protest as a risk to the family's income. Grandmother focuses instead on their ability to make things for themselves.**
3	Why might the writer contrast the narrator's expectation of a king with Gandhi's plain cloth and dusty marchers? Connect this choice to the protest's historical setting.	**The contrast presents Gandhi as taking part alongside ordinary people rather than ruling above them. It emphasizes that this challenge to British rule depends on people acting together.**
4	How does the image of the door in the final sentence reflect the narrator's changing view of life under British rule?	**The door suggests that the narrator now sees a possibility for people to act for themselves. Gathering salt helps the narrator imagine a choice that the law had seemed to deny them.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I watched my child bend toward the salt while the tide pushed closer. My baskets bring us food when traders buy them, and I still fear that the authorities will close the market after this protest. Last night, I tucked Grandmother's pouch into my belt. I had woven it with my own hands, but I never thought of it as a challenge to anyone. Today my child filled it with salt from our shore. I called out about the tide, not the officers. I am still afraid of losing our orders. I am also tired of asking permission for what the sea leaves behind.

Accept interpretations supported by specific passage details. For the diary entry, look for Father's concern about his livelihood alongside a plausible response to gathering salt under British rule.