

The Empty Chair

Trace how a character's choices reveal a message.

7R2 "Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; summarize a text. (RI&RL)"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details that show what Nia notices or does, then number them 1, 2, and 3 in the order they happen. These details help you trace how the text's message develops.

The Empty Chair

- ① On Monday, Nia noticed the empty chair beside Mateo in science class. Mateo usually traded jokes while they set up experiments, but today he kept his eyes on his notebook. The chair's metal legs squeaked whenever someone brushed it, making its emptiness hard to ignore. At lunch, Nia saw him alone near the library doors. She almost walked over, then remembered she had promised to help plan the school talent show. "He probably wants space," she told herself, and hurried toward the auditorium.
- ② During rehearsal, Nia could not focus on the song list. She remembered Mateo's unfinished sentence during class, "My dad..." Then the bell rang, and he had shut his notebook. Nia asked the drama teacher if someone else could hand out programs. She found Mateo by the library and said, "I noticed you seemed worried. Do you want company?" Mateo nodded. His father had lost his job, and Mateo was afraid they might have to move before summer.
- ③ Nia did not know what to say about jobs or moving. Instead, she sat with Mateo until the late bus arrived and listened while he explained what he knew. The next day, she asked whether he wanted help finishing the science experiment. Mateo said yes. Weeks later, his family stayed in town after his father found work. Nia still helped with the talent show, but she no longer treated a busy schedule as a reason to overlook someone. A small question, she learned, can open a needed conversation.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Which action in paragraph 1 shows that Nia first chooses her own schedule instead of checking on Mateo?

2 How does Nia's choice in paragraph 2 differ from her choice in paragraph 1? Use details from both paragraphs.

3 State a theme of the story. Then explain how two events from the story develop that theme.

4 Write a summary of the story in two or three sentences. Include the most important events and the story's outcome.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a four-sentence new scene about a different student who notices that someone may need help. Show the student's first choice, a changed choice, and the result, so the scene develops the idea that small acts of attention can matter.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three details that show what Nia notices or does, then number them 1, 2, and 3 in the order they happen. These details help you trace how the text’s message develops. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which action in paragraph 1 shows that Nia first chooses her own schedule instead of checking on Mateo?	Nia decides to help plan the talent show and hurries to the auditorium instead of walking over to Mateo.
2	How does Nia’s choice in paragraph 2 differ from her choice in paragraph 1? Use details from both paragraphs.	In paragraph 1, Nia assumes Mateo wants space and leaves. In paragraph 2, she asks someone else to do her program job, finds Mateo, and asks whether he wants company.
3	State a theme of the story. Then explain how two events from the story develop that theme.	One theme is that noticing someone’s trouble and reaching out can provide important support. Nia first overlooks Mateo because she is busy, but later she asks about him, listens, and offers help with science.
4	Write a summary of the story in two or three sentences. Include the most important events and the story’s outcome.	Nia notices that Mateo is upset but first chooses talent-show work over checking on him. Later, she learns that his father lost his job, listens to Mateo, and helps him with science. Nia learns not to let a busy schedule keep her from noticing someone who needs support.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After practice, Lila saw Omar staring at a broken backpack strap, but she first rushed toward the bus. At the gate, she remembered how quiet he had been all day and went back. She offered a safety pin from her pencil pouch and walked with him to the office. Omar smiled, and Lila realized that stopping for one minute could make a hard day easier.

Accept themes about paying attention to others, showing care through action, or making time to support someone when students support them with events from the text. Summaries should include Nia’s initial choice, her later response to Mateo, and her learning, without retelling minor details.