

Choices That Connect

Compare how three endings complicate a shared theme.

12.RL.3.B “Compare and contrast the development of a universal theme over the course of two or more literary works including how each theme emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB These are three original classroom stories. Underline each character’s choice and circle its cost or consequence. Compare how the endings develop a shared theme.

Three Small Choices

- ① **The Spare Key.** Mara kept the workshop’s spare key beneath her ledger. Every hour at the bench mattered; her first paid order was due Friday. When her neighbor asked to borrow the bench to finish a ramp for his mother, Mara pointed to the delivery date. Then she imagined the woman waiting at the foot of her own steps. She offered him Thursday afternoon and worked late to recover the lost time. On Friday, the neighbor arrived with lunch and offered to help pack her order. Mara accepted. Before locking up, she moved the spare key from beneath the ledger to a hook beside the door.
- ② **The Last Fare.** Jae had saved exactly enough for the bus to a scholarship interview. At the station, a traveler discovered that her purse was missing. She needed to reach her son before his operation, she told the clerk. Jae bought her ticket with his savings. By the time a friend answered his call for a ride, the interview hour had passed. The college declined to reschedule. Weeks later, the traveler sent a letter saying she had reached the hospital in time. Jae placed it beside the college’s refusal. He did not tear up either letter. When his friend called his choice foolish, Jae said, “It cost what it cost.”

- ③ **The Orchard Gate.** After the storm, Nia asked the orchard keeper whether she could collect fallen apples for her grandmother. He agreed, warning that only a few unbruised ones remained. At the gate, Nia found two neighbors waiting with empty bags. She could have filled hers first; instead, she called them inside and proposed dividing the usable fruit equally. Her own bag was lighter than she had hoped. At home, her grandmother began slicing their share. Nia reached for the bruised side of an apple, then stopped when her grandmother turned it over and found firm flesh beneath. “We will have enough for this pie,” she said. Nia thought of the other kitchens.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- ① How does the position of Mara’s key change in meaning from the beginning to the end? Connect that detail to a developing theme.

- ② Compare the costs and outcomes of Mara’s and Jae’s choices. How does the second story complicate the first story’s view of helping?

- ③ What does Jae’s decision to keep both letters suggest? Explain an interpretation using the letters’ different contents.

- ④ How do Nia’s lighter bag and final thought about other kitchens refine the shared theme? Compare her ending with one other ending.

3

YOUR TURN

_____ Your own words

Write a 110-150-word comparative analysis. State one theme shared by the three stories. Trace how a specific detail in each story develops or complicates it, and explain one important difference between the endings.

Trace and compare

Discuss all three endings and connect details to your theme, rather than only retelling the plots.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

These are three original classroom stories. Underline each character's choice and circle its cost or consequence. Compare how the endings develop a shared theme. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the position of Mara's key change in meaning from the beginning to the end? Connect that detail to a developing theme.	Hidden beneath the ledger, the key suggests that paid work controls access. Moving it to a visible hook suggests greater openness after Mara experiences cooperation; care can change how people share resources.
2	Compare the costs and outcomes of Mara's and Jae's choices. How does the second story complicate the first story's view of helping?	Mara loses work time but finishes and receives help. Jae loses an interview that is not restored. His traveler's gratitude complicates any assumption that generosity brings an equivalent reward.
3	What does Jae's decision to keep both letters suggest? Explain an interpretation using the letters' different contents.	The hospital letter records another person's benefit; the refusal records Jae's lost opportunity. Keeping both suggests that he acknowledges the value and cost together rather than pretending either cancels the other.
4	How do Nia's lighter bag and final thought about other kitchens refine the shared theme? Compare her ending with one other ending.	Her share is reduced, yet she imagines other households benefiting. Unlike Mara's reciprocal help, Nia's outcome emphasizes sharing enough rather than receiving a personal return; like Jae, she accepts a cost.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The stories suggest that care for others can create shared value without erasing personal cost. Mara initially protects workshop time, but the key's move from beneath her ledger to a visible hook shows growing openness. Her neighbor's practical help makes cooperation reciprocal. Jae's ending complicates that hopeful pattern: the hospital letter confirms a benefit, while the college's refusal preserves a loss. Keeping both letters suggests that gratitude cannot replace the opportunity he gave up. Nia also receives less than she hoped, but her thought about other kitchens broadens the meaning of enough beyond her own household. Unlike Mara, she receives no repayment. Together, the endings present generosity as a choice whose value can exceed an individual reward, even when its cost remains real.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

Accept other supported themes and interpretations. The sample uses 123 words. Do not claim Jae regains the interview or that Nia's reduced share becomes larger.