Beyond the Bridge

Trace how memory and shared knowledge shape a community decision.

11-12.RL.2 "Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text. Analyze and evaluate their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another within a complex account..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details that show how the value of remembering develops, number them in story order, and circle the moment when remembered experience changes the bridge plan.

The Stripes on the Posts

1 The morning after the council posted its plans, Mara found her grandfather beneath the condemned footbridge, holding a tin of blue paint. The spring flood had twisted the railing, and the engineers said the bridge must come down. On its posts, pale blue stripes marked where water had reached in earlier floods. Her grandfather had painted each stripe after helping neighbors cross to the clinic on the far bank. "They'll build a stronger bridge," Mara said. He dipped his brush anyway. "Strong enough for what?" he asked, touching the highest stripe with one finger. Mara thought he meant the bridge.

2 At the public meeting, the new bridge appeared on a screen, wider and higher than the old one. Mara almost called it an improvement until her grandfather stood. He did not ask the council to save the rotten posts. Instead, he described how, during the last flood, people reached the bridge but could not reach the clinic because the path beyond it lay under water. A shopkeeper added that delivery vans had blocked the only dry turn. The engineer unfolded a survey of the riverbank. "Our design fixes the crossing," she said, "but not the trip." No one applauded; several people leaned forward.

3 By summer, the old bridge was gone. Mara helped her grandfather carry a striped piece of one post to the clinic, where the staff set it beside the door with the dates of the floods. Across the river, workers built a new bridge and raised the path leading from it, using the survey and residents' accounts to choose its route. When the first boards were laid, Mara missed the narrow sway of the old crossing. Her grandfather did too. But on their walk to the clinic, he stopped pointing backward and began counting the turns ahead, checking whether a wheelchair could make them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In two objective sentences, summarize the conflict and resolution that support the story's themes.

2. Identify two themes. For each, explain how a detail near the beginning and a detail near the end support it.

3. How does the public meeting bring the two themes together and change what the council's plan must address?

4. How does Mara's attention to the turns ahead at the end change the meaning of her earlier belief that a stronger bridge is enough?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 100 word label for the saved post, addressed to a visitor who has not read the story. Begin with a two-sentence objective summary, then explain how two themes develop and build on each other, including why saving the post alone would not resolve the conflict.

ANSWER KEY

Beyond the Bridge

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.RL.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three details that show how the value of remembering develops, number them in story order, and circle the moment when remembered experience changes the bridge plan. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In two objective sentences, summarize the conflict and resolution that support the story's themes.	**A flood damages the footbridge, and the council plans to replace it. After residents describe obstacles beyond the bridge, workers build a new crossing and raise the route to the clinic.**
2	Identify two themes. For each, explain how a detail near the beginning and a detail near the end support it.	**Memory can guide change: the flood stripes first record past danger, and residents' accounts later help shape the new route. Good public decisions draw on different kinds of knowledge: Mara initially trusts a stronger bridge alone, but the finished route uses both the engineer's survey and residents' experiences.**
3	How does the public meeting bring the two themes together and change what the council's plan must address?	**The grandfather's memory of the flooded path and the shopkeeper's account reveal a problem the bridge design misses. The engineer recognizes that the survey and residents' experiences must inform a route to the clinic, not just a stronger crossing.**
4	How does Mara's attention to the turns ahead at the end change the meaning of her earlier belief that a stronger bridge is enough?	**At first, Mara treats the bridge itself as the solution. By the end, she considers whether people, including wheelchair users, can complete the trip, showing that the new plan must provide access beyond the crossing.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A flood damaged the old footbridge, and the council proposed a stronger replacement. After residents described the flooded path beyond it, workers raised the route to the clinic as well as rebuilding the crossing. The saved striped post records earlier floods, showing that memory can offer more than comfort. At the meeting, the grandfather's account and the engineer's survey together exposed a problem that a new bridge or a memorial alone could not solve. The new route turns remembered danger into shared action, so preserving the past and planning for access strengthen each other.

Accept other defensible themes if students trace each across the story and explain their interaction with specific evidence. Summaries should report events without judging the characters or the council.