The Crooked Cart

Trace how a character's choices develop a theme.

6.RL.2 "Determine a theme or central idea(s) of a text. Analyze its development over the course of the text. Provide an objective summary of the text. Identify key textual details to support the analysis."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail in each paragraph that shows how Nia responds to Eli, then number the details 1, 2, and 3 to track how her response changes.

The Book Swap Cart

1 On the morning of the school book swap, a cart full of novels lurched across the library floor. Nia caught a stack before it fell. She had promised to deliver the books before the first bell. "The top shelf is crooked," she told Eli, who had come to help. He pointed toward the wheels, but Nia was already tightening a shelf screw with the librarian's screwdriver. The shelf stood straight. Nia pushed the cart again, and it swung sharply left, sending three paperbacks sliding onto the floor.

2 Eli knelt beside the cart. "Could we watch what happens when it moves?" he asked. Nia wanted to keep turning screws, but the first bell was only minutes away. She pushed slowly while Eli watched. One front wheel barely turned; a strip of packing tape was wrapped around its axle. Nia had been so focused on the shelf that she had not noticed it. She pulled off the tape, and Eli held the cart steady. Then they tested it together. This time, it rolled in a straight line.

3 At the library doorway, Nia began to say that she had fixed the cart. She stopped when she saw Eli carrying the fallen paperbacks. "We figured it out," she said instead. They set the books on a table just as students arrived for the swap. Later, another cart rattled across the floor. Nia glanced at its shelves, then turned to Eli. "What do you notice?" she asked. He crouched to look, and Nia waited beside him, ready to check whatever he found.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is one theme of the story? State it as a lesson about people, not just Nia and Eli.

2. Which detail in the first paragraph shows that Nia has not yet learned this lesson? Explain how it supports your answer.

3. How does Nia's approach change in the second paragraph? Use a detail from the text.

4. How does Nia's response to the rattling cart at the end show that the theme has developed?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence objective summary of the story. Include the problem, what Nia and Eli do about it, and what happens at the end, without adding your opinions.

ANSWER KEY

The Crooked Cart

GRADE 6 · 6.RL.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail in each paragraph that shows how Nia responds to Eli, then number the details 1, 2, and 3 to track how her response changes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is one theme of the story? State it as a lesson about people, not just Nia and Eli.	**Listening to others can help people solve problems they cannot solve alone.**
2	Which detail in the first paragraph shows that Nia has not yet learned this lesson? Explain how it supports your answer.	**Eli points toward the wheels, but Nia keeps tightening a shelf screw. She acts on her own idea instead of considering his.**
3	How does Nia's approach change in the second paragraph? Use a detail from the text.	**Nia agrees to push the cart while Eli watches. By working together, they discover tape wrapped around a wheel's axle.**
4	How does Nia's response to the rattling cart at the end show that the theme has developed?	**Instead of deciding what is wrong by herself, Nia asks Eli what he notices and waits to hear his idea.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before a school book swap, Nia tries to fix a cart that keeps veering left. Her first attempt fails, so she and Eli watch the cart move together. They find tape caught around a wheel's axle, remove it, and deliver the books. When another cart rattles later, Nia asks Eli what he notices.

Accept other themes supported by details from all three paragraphs. Summaries should present the main events accurately and without opinions.