The Spare Key

Trace how a story's message develops through a character's choices.

7.RL.2.a "Analyze its development over the course of the text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one choice Mara makes in each paragraph, then number the choices 1 to 3 to track how her view of sharing the greenhouse changes.

The Greenhouse Key

1. Every morning, Mara unlocked the school greenhouse before the buses arrived. Her grandfather had built its crooked shelves, and she liked knowing exactly where each tray belonged. When Eli, a new student, offered to help prepare seedlings for the spring sale, she handed him a broom instead. "The seedlings are delicate," she said, slipping the greenhouse key back into her pocket. Eli swept without arguing. As Mara watered the trays, she noticed rainwater pooling beneath the door but decided she could deal with it later.

2. That afternoon, a hard rain drummed on the glass roof. Water spilled under the door and crept toward the seed trays on the floor. Mara stacked trays on a bench, but its legs wobbled under the weight. Eli appeared with a pile of empty crates. "These will lift them off the floor," he said. Mara hesitated, then let him arrange the crates while she carried the trays. Together they cleared the floor before the first tray tipped. Mara still held the key, but she stopped giving Eli only small chores.

3. By Friday, the greenhouse smelled of damp soil instead of standing water. Mara found Eli measuring the gap beneath the door with a ruler. He suggested a strip of rubber to keep the next storm out, and Mara asked him to help cut it after school. When the spring sale volunteers arrived, she showed them where the trays belonged and gave Eli the spare key. Her grandfather's shelves were still crooked, but now more than one pair of hands knew how to keep the seedlings safe.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do Mara's choices in the first paragraph introduce an idea about sharing responsibility?

2. How does the storm begin to change that idea?

3. How does Mara's response to Eli's idea about the door develop the story's message?

4. How does giving Eli the spare key complete the change that began in the first paragraph? What message does this change suggest?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Replace the last three sentences of the story with four or five new sentences. Have Mara make a different choice about Eli's idea or the spare key, show what happens because of it, and end with a different message that grows from the story.

The Spare Key

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one choice Mara makes in each paragraph, then number the choices 1 to 3 to track how her view of sharing the greenhouse changes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Mara's choices in the first paragraph introduce an idea about sharing responsibility?	**Mara gives Eli a broom instead of letting him handle the seedlings and keeps the key. These choices suggest she thinks she must handle the important work herself.**
2	How does the storm begin to change that idea?	**Mara's bench wobbles, but Eli's crates help save the trays. Mara lets him take on an important part of the work.**
3	How does Mara's response to Eli's idea about the door develop the story's message?	**Mara asks Eli to help cut the rubber strip instead of dismissing his idea, showing that she is beginning to trust his help.**
4	How does giving Eli the spare key complete the change that began in the first paragraph? What message does this change suggest?	**At first, Mara keeps the key and limits Eli's work. By giving him a spare key, she shares responsibility for the greenhouse. The change suggests that working together can help protect what matters.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Eli suggested a strip of rubber, but Mara said she would fix the gap after the spring sale. She kept the spare key in her pocket and wrote "door" on a scrap of paper. A storm arrived first, soaking the lowest trays while Mara was home. The next morning, she found her note beside the soggy seedlings. Wanting to protect something matters only if you act in time.

Accept interpretations supported by Mara's choices across the story. Alternate endings should follow from an earlier detail and develop a message different from the original ending's message about sharing responsibility.