The Faint Seam

Trace how a story develops an idea through changing details.

9-10.RL.2.a "Analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it is introduced, built, and refined by specific details."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail in each paragraph that shows Mara's changing view of caring for the backdrop, and number the details 1, 2, and 3. Circle the detail that shows why fixing the damage is not enough.

The Painted Harbor

1. When the auditorium lights came on, Mara saw a white slash across the painted harbor. Her elbow had caught the scenery cart, and a metal latch had scraped the backdrop her class had spent six weeks making. The play opened that night. Mara pulled a curtain across the tear before anyone else entered. At lunch she told Jonah, who was checking props, that the backdrop was finished and ready. He grinned and said the harbor reminded him of the one his grandfather had left behind. Mara nodded, although she could see the curtain's crooked edge from the doorway.

2. After school, Mara brought a jar of blue paint and a narrow brush. She meant to cover the slash before rehearsal. Up close, the harbor was not one shade of blue. Jonah had pressed pale thumbprints into the water for foam, and other students had mixed gray into the clouds. Mara painted over the torn place anyway. From the back row, her patch looked smooth; beside it, the thumbprints vanished under a flat blue stripe. When Jonah arrived, he asked why the curtain was closed. Mara opened her mouth to say the lights were too bright, then handed him the brush.

3. Jonah looked at the stripe and then at the latch on the cart. Mara told him what had happened, including the lie at lunch. He was quiet long enough for her to hear the actors warming up behind the door. Then he took a pencil and sketched a line of small fishing boats along the damaged water. "We should ask the others before we change their painting," he said. By curtain time, three classmates had added boats, and the patched water still showed a faint seam. Mara stood beside the backdrop as the house lights dimmed, ready to explain it to anyone who asked.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do Mara's first actions introduce an idea about the difference between hiding a mistake and caring for something?

2. How do the thumbprints and Mara's blue stripe build that idea in the second paragraph?

3. How does Jonah's request to ask the others refine the idea developed so far?

4. At the end, the seam is still visible. How does that detail develop the story's idea differently from the white slash at the beginning?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 5- to 7-sentence scene in a different setting about a character who faces a choice. Use details to introduce, build, and refine a theme, then add one sentence explaining how three details develop that theme.

ANSWER KEY

The Faint Seam

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.RL.2.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail in each paragraph that shows Mara's changing view of caring for the backdrop, and number the details 1, 2, and 3. Circle the detail that shows why fixing the damage is not enough. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Mara's first actions introduce an idea about the difference between hiding a mistake and caring for something?	**Mara hides the tear with a curtain and tells Jonah the backdrop is ready. These actions introduce the idea that concealing damage is not the same as caring for the shared painting.**
2	How do the thumbprints and Mara's blue stripe build that idea in the second paragraph?	**The thumbprints show that other students contributed details to the harbor. Mara's smooth stripe covers some of their work, showing that her private attempt to fix the tear can cause another kind of loss.**
3	How does Jonah's request to ask the others refine the idea developed so far?	**Jonah does not simply hide the damage or decide on a repair himself. His request shows that caring for shared work means giving its makers a say in what happens to it.**
4	At the end, the seam is still visible. How does that detail develop the story's idea differently from the white slash at the beginning?	**The white slash first prompts Mara to hide her mistake. The faint seam remains after she tells the truth and the classmates help, suggesting that taking responsibility does not require making every trace of a mistake disappear.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the bus stop, Imani held an extra scarf while a younger student shivered nearby. She hesitated, afraid to miss the bus if she stopped to talk. When the student dropped a stack of papers, Imani helped collect them. They missed the bus, but Imani offered the scarf as they waited. The student wrapped it around both their shoulders, and Imani felt less alone in the cold. The extra scarf introduces a chance to help, the fallen papers build the theme through Imani's choice, and the shared scarf refines it by showing that kindness can comfort both people.

Accept different theme statements if students support them with details from the beginning, middle, and end. For the open task, look for a theme that changes or gains complexity, plus an explanation of three specific details.