

Water, Work, Belonging

Trace how a character's choices reveal a universal theme.

10.RL.1.A "Analyze the development of universal themes (e.g., survival of the fittest, coming of age, power of love) prevalent in world literature (e.g., short stories, poems, plays, novels, and literary nonfiction) of different cultures and eras."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three moments that show a change in what Amaya values. Number them 1, 2, and 3 in the order they occur so you can trace the change across the story.

Channel Before Dawn

- ① In 1924, fourteen-year-old Amaya lived in a highland village in Peru, where her family grew potatoes on terraced fields. Each spring, neighbors joined a faena, a day of shared labor, to clear the narrow irrigation channel above the village. Amaya wanted to stay home and finish a bright red belt on her loom. When her grandmother placed a hoe in her hands, Amaya sighed. "The channel is everyone's work," her grandmother said. Amaya climbed the slope, certain that adults used that phrase only to steal a young person's time.
- ② At the channel, Amaya saw mud blocking a stone gate that directed water toward the lower fields. Her cousin Tomas slipped while lifting a rock, and Amaya dropped her hoe to steady him. Together, they loosened the mud, while older workers repaired the gate. By noon, water ran through the channel in a thin, shining line. Amaya noticed her grandmother watching the fields below, where several families waited with buckets. For the first time, Amaya understood that the belt on her loom mattered to her, but the water mattered to everyone.
- ③ That evening, Amaya finished the belt, but she did not tie it around her own waist. At supper, she wrapped it around her grandmother's shoulders, a quiet thank-you. Then Amaya unfolded a worn paper map beside the cooking fire and asked which channel gate served each terrace. Her grandmother smiled and showed her the names of the fields. Amaya still cared about making beautiful things, yet she now saw herself as part of the work that kept her village alive. The next spring, she planned to arrive at the channel before anyone called her.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- 1** What universal theme develops in the story? State the theme as a complete idea, and use two details from the story to support it.

- 2** How do the faena and the irrigation channel help develop the story's theme?

- 3** Compare what the belt means to Amaya at the beginning and at the end of the story. What does this change reveal?

- 4** How does Amaya's final plan to arrive early at the channel show the development of the theme?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a literary work from a different culture or era than this story. Write exactly five sentences that name one universal theme shared by both texts, explain how it develops in each text, use one specific moment from each text, and explain one important difference in the two portrayals.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three moments that show a change in what Amaya values. Number them 1, 2, and 3 in the order they occur so you can trace the change across the story. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What universal theme develops in the story? State the theme as a complete idea, and use two details from the story to support it.	A person matures by recognizing responsibility to the community, not only personal wishes. Amaya first wants to stay home to weave, then helps clear the channel and plans to return before anyone asks her.
2	How do the faena and the irrigation channel help develop the story's theme?	They show that the village depends on shared work. Seeing families waiting for water helps Amaya understand that maintaining the channel affects everyone.
3	Compare what the belt means to Amaya at the beginning and at the end of the story. What does this change reveal?	At first, the belt is a personal project she wants to finish. At the end, she gives it to her grandmother in gratitude, revealing a shift from self-focus toward connection and appreciation.
4	How does Amaya's final plan to arrive early at the channel show the development of the theme?	Her plan shows that she has accepted responsibility willingly. She no longer sees community work as something adults force her to do.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Both “Channel Before Dawn” and the ancient Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh develop the universal theme that responsibility grows from connection to others. Amaya changes when she sees families waiting for water and chooses to help maintain the channel. Gilgamesh changes after Enkidu dies, because grief reveals that his strength cannot defeat death or replace friendship. Amaya’s lesson leads her toward service within her village, while Gilgamesh’s lesson leads him to accept human limits. Each text shows a self-focused person becoming more aware of duties beyond personal desire.

Accept other clearly stated universal themes if students support them with accurate evidence and explain development from beginning to end. In the open response, accept any appropriate literary work from a different culture or era, as long as the comparison includes specific evidence and analysis.