

Choices That Connect

Trace one universal theme across three short literary works.

12.RL.3.B "Compare and contrast the development of a universal theme over the course of two or more literary works including how each theme emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail in each titled work that shows a character facing a choice, circle one detail that shows the result, and draw arrows between details that reveal a shared theme. This helps you track how a theme develops differently across works.

Three Small Choices

- ① In "The Salt Jar," Mara counted the remaining grains in her family's jar while wind scraped dust against the shutters. Her younger brother asked for more than the measured pinch in his bowl, but Mara refused, remembering their father's warning that the market cart might not return. At dusk, she saw old Mr. Iven collapse beside the dry well. Mara carried him half the jar's salt, though doing so meant her family's soup would be bland for days. When the cart arrived late that night, the driver gave Mara extra salt because Mr. Iven had repaired its broken wheel years earlier.
- ② In "The Harbor Map," Jae was the newest apprentice at a lighthouse whose lamp had failed during a foggy night. The keeper ordered Jae to guard the only dry wick until a repair boat came. From the cliff, Jae heard a fishing crew ringing a bell below, unable to find the channel. He lit the wick despite the keeper's order, guiding the boat safely toward shore. The flame burned out before the repair boat arrived, leaving the lighthouse dark. At dawn, however, the rescued crew returned with oil from their vessel and helped Jae relight the lamp. The keeper silently placed the harbor map in Jae's hands.
- ③ In "The Orchard Fence," Nia found a gap in the fence around the town orchard just as a storm bent the young trees. She had planned to sneak through after dark and take apples for her grandmother, who was ill. Instead, Nia knocked at the gatekeeper's cottage and reported the damage. The gatekeeper was away, so Nia spent the night tying branches and calling neighbors to help. By morning, many apples had fallen and could not be sold. Nia returned home empty-handed, but her grandmother smiled when neighbors arrived with shared baskets, saying the orchard had fed everyone because someone had protected it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Compare the pressures Mara and Jae face at the beginnings of their stories. How does each pressure begin to develop a shared theme?

2 How do Mara's and Jae's choices shape the shared theme in different ways? Use one detail from each work.

3 Compare the outcomes of Mara's and Jae's actions. What do these outcomes suggest about how care can spread through a community?

4 How does "The Orchard Fence" refine the theme developed in the first two works? Explain how Nia's outcome is similar to and different from Mara's or Jae's outcome.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 110 to 140 word comparative analysis of the three works. State one universal theme they share, then explain how the theme emerges and is shaped or refined in each work using one specific detail from each.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one detail in each titled work that shows a character facing a choice, circle one detail that shows the result, and draw arrows between details that reveal a shared theme. This helps you track how a theme develops differently across works. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare the pressures Mara and Jae face at the beginnings of their stories. How does each pressure begin to develop a shared theme?	Mara feels pressure to save scarce salt for her family, while Jae feels pressure to obey the keeper and preserve the wick. Both conflicts begin a theme about balancing personal duty or safety with the needs of others.
2	How do Mara's and Jae's choices shape the shared theme in different ways? Use one detail from each work.	Mara gives Mr. Iven salt even though her family will have bland soup, while Jae lights the wick even though he disobeys an order and uses the only dry wick. Both choose to help others, but Mara sacrifices family comfort and Jae risks authority and the lighthouse's resources.
3	Compare the outcomes of Mara's and Jae's actions. What do these outcomes suggest about how care can spread through a community?	Mara receives extra salt because Mr. Iven had once helped the cart driver, and Jae receives oil from the rescued crew. Both outcomes suggest that helping others can create reciprocal support within a community.
4	How does "The Orchard Fence" refine the theme developed in the first two works? Explain how Nia's outcome is similar to and different from Mara's or Jae's outcome.	Like Mara and Jae, Nia helps others by sacrificing her own immediate goal. Unlike them, she returns home empty-handed and the orchard loses fruit, which shows that community responsibility can involve real loss even though neighbors later share food.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Across the three works, a universal theme is that people strengthen a community when they place others' needs beside, or above, their own immediate interests. In "The Salt Jar," the theme emerges when Mara first protects her family's limited food, then grows when she gives salt to Mr. Iven. The driver's extra salt suggests that past and present care can circulate through a community. In "The Harbor Map," Jae risks disobeying an order to save strangers, and the crew's oil shows that his action creates cooperation. "The Orchard Fence" refines the theme most sharply. Nia receives no apples, and the orchard loses fruit, yet neighbors bring baskets because she protected a shared resource. Together, the works show that communal responsibility may involve sacrifice, not merely reward.

Accept defensible statements of the shared theme that are supported by accurate details from at least two works. For Part 3, students should address all three works, compare their development of the theme, and explain how specific details shape or complicate the theme.