Break the Logjam

Trace a tall tale's problem, solution, and lesson.

3.RL "The student will use textual evidence to demonstrate comprehension and build knowledge from a variety of grade-level complex literary texts read to include fantasy, humor, fable/fairy tale, realistic fiction, historical fiction, biography..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle the sentence that tells the main problem. Underline two events that help solve the problem, so you can trace the plot from conflict to resolution.

Mae Maple's Logjam

1. Long ago, in the piney hills of Tennessee, lived Mae Maple, a young lumberjack known for her strong arms and quick ideas. Each spring, Mae floated cut logs down Silver Creek to town. One April morning, she found the creek blocked by a mountain-high pile of fallen trees. The water slapped the logs, and the town's sawmill waited with no wood.

2. Mae first tugged a trunk, but it would not budge. She felt worried when she heard the mill bell ring in the distance. Then Mae studied the jam. She noticed that one huge pine held the others in place. Mae tied her rope to the pine, planted her boots in the muddy bank, and pulled until her hands burned.

3. With a crack like thunder, the pine rolled aside. The trapped logs rushed forward, splashing bright drops over Mae's hat. By sunset, the creek carried every log to the sawmill. Mae laughed, but she also remembered her fear. After that day, she did not rush at a problem. She looked closely first, then used her strength.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What thematic topic does this story show? What lesson does Mae learn? Use one event from the story in your answer.

2. What is the central conflict in the story? How is it resolved? Include two plot events in your answer.

3. How do Mae's feelings and actions change from the beginning of the problem to the end? Use details from the passage.

4. Which event shows that this story is a tall tale? Explain how the words "a crack like thunder" affect your picture of the event.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 3-sentence tall-tale scene about a character who solves a huge problem. Include one sensory detail, show a character trait through an action, and end with a lesson the character learns.

ANSWER KEY

Break the Logjam

GRADE 3 · 3.RL

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle the sentence that tells the main problem. Underline two events that help solve the problem, so you can trace the plot from conflict to resolution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What thematic topic does this story show? What lesson does Mae learn? Use one event from the story in your answer.	**The story has a theme of solving problems with determination and careful thinking. Mae learns to look closely before acting because she studies the jam, finds the pine holding it, and then uses her strength.**
2	What is the central conflict in the story? How is it resolved? Include two plot events in your answer.	**The creek is blocked, so the logs cannot reach the sawmill. Mae notices the huge pine holding the jam, pulls it aside with her rope, and the logs move down the creek.**
3	How do Mae's feelings and actions change from the beginning of the problem to the end? Use details from the passage.	**At first, Mae is worried and tries to tug a trunk that will not move. Later, she becomes thoughtful and determined, studies the jam, and makes a plan to pull the pine aside.**
4	Which event shows that this story is a tall tale? Explain how the words "a crack like thunder" affect your picture of the event.	**Mae pulling aside the huge pine that holds a mountain-high logjam is an exaggerated event, which is a tall-tale feature. "A crack like thunder" makes the pine rolling aside seem loud and powerful.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When the river froze solid in July, Jada heard the ice boom across the fields. She tapped it with her giant spoon until a warm spring burst through, and the cattle could drink again. Jada learned to study a strange problem before choosing a tool.

Accept reasonable theme statements about determination, careful problem-solving, or thinking before acting when supported by passage evidence. For the open task, check for exactly three sentences, an exaggerated tall-tale event, a sensory detail, an action showing a trait, and a clear lesson.