Light Along the Harbor

Trace how setting, choices, and events reveal a theme.

8.RL.1.A "Analyze and explain the development of theme(s) over the course of texts and their relationship to the characters, settings, plots, and overall messages."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details that develop a possible theme, number them in plot order, and circle any setting detail that affects Mara's choices.

The Pier Lantern

1 By late November, the harbor town lost daylight before Mara finished stocking shelves at her grandfather's bait shop. Since her mother moved inland for work, Mara had lived above the shop with Grandfather Ivo, who walked slowly after his injury. Each evening, she carried a lantern to the pier so returning boats could spot the narrow channel. Mara resented the chore. Her friends practiced music at the community hall while she climbed through wind and salt spray, guarding a light that seemed to belong to someone else's past.

2 One stormy Friday, Mara saw a small fishing boat drifting beyond the channel markers. Its engine had failed, and the rain hid the shore. Ivo reached for his coat, but Mara stopped him. "You cannot climb that pier tonight," she said. She took the lantern herself, then ran to ring the old bell beside it. The boat turned toward the sound and reached the dock safely. When the soaked captain thanked Ivo, Mara expected him to praise her. Instead, Ivo quietly gave the captain dry blankets, leaving Mara alone with the lantern's warm glow.

3 At the hall next day, Mara told her friends she could not stay for rehearsal. They offered to carry the lantern with her after practice, but she shook her head. "I know the path," she said, surprised by her own smile. Later, she cleaned the lantern's cloudy glass and placed it at the pier before sunset. This time, she noticed how its beam joined the lamps along the docks, each one guiding someone home. She understood the chore was not a chain to the past. It was her place in caring for one another.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the harbor setting help explain Mara's attitude toward carrying the lantern in paragraph 1?

2. Which plot event begins to change Mara's view of her responsibility? Explain how her actions during that event show the change.

3. How does the pier change from a place Mara resents to a place where she recognizes connection to others? Use details from paragraphs 1 and 3.

4. State a theme of the passage. How do Mara, the harbor setting, and the plot events work together to support the overall message?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence new scene set one week later at the harbor. Develop a related theme about shared responsibility through Mara's actions, a harbor setting detail, and a plot event, then state the theme in your fifth sentence.

ANSWER KEY

Light Along the Harbor

GRADE 8 · 8.RL.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three details that develop a possible theme, number them in plot order, and circle any setting detail that affects Mara's choices. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the harbor setting help explain Mara's attitude toward carrying the lantern in paragraph 1?	**The early darkness, narrow channel, wind, and salt spray make the lantern necessary but isolate Mara from her friends, so she views the job as an unwanted burden.**
2	Which plot event begins to change Mara's view of her responsibility? Explain how her actions during that event show the change.	**When the fishing boat's engine fails in the storm, Mara stops Ivo from going out, carries the lantern, and rings the bell. Her actions show that she takes responsibility for helping others.**
3	How does the pier change from a place Mara resents to a place where she recognizes connection to others? Use details from paragraphs 1 and 3.	**At first, the pier represents a lonely chore that keeps Mara from music practice. By the end, she sees the lantern's beam joining other dock lights to guide people home, so the pier represents shared care.**
4	State a theme of the passage. How do Mara, the harbor setting, and the plot events work together to support the overall message?	**A theme is that accepting responsibility can help a person find belonging in a community. Mara's rescue of the boat and her later view of the harbor lights show that her work protects and connects her town.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A week later, fog covered the harbor before the evening boats arrived. Mara found two younger volunteers arguing over who had to light the pier lanterns. She showed them how to clean the glass, then asked each person to take a lamp along the dock. When a boat's horn sounded, the three lights made a clear path to shore. The scene develops the theme that a community stays safe when people share needed work.

Accept theme statements supported by accurate evidence about Mara's changing attitude, the harbor setting, and the boat rescue. For the open task, accept varied scenes if they contain five sentences, include the required elements, and clearly state a related theme.