One Small Flame

Trace how a character's choices develop a theme.

8.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 short stories, literary nonfiction, novels, poetry, and drama..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details that show how Nia's sense of responsibility changes. Number them 1, 2, and 3 in plot order to trace the story's theme.

The Lanterns of Bellweather

1 On the island of Bellweather, every house hung a storm lantern before the autumn fog arrived. Twelve-year-old Nia considered the task a tiresome rule. Her father repaired fishing nets, so he asked Nia to carry oil to Mrs. Vale, whose hands shook too much to lift a can. Nia sighed and left the oil beside her own door instead. "Someone else will help her," she said. Across the harbor, the lighthouse bell rang once, warning that fog was moving inland.

2 By sunset, fog swallowed the road to the docks, and the bell rang three times. Nia saw Mrs. Vale standing on her porch, peering into gray air. The old woman held an unlit lantern, but Nia's oil can was still at home. Nia ran back, grabbed it, and slipped on wet stones. When she reached the porch, Mrs. Vale whispered, "I thought my light did not matter." Nia filled the lantern and struck a match. Its small flame made the next house visible, then the next.

3 At dawn, the fog thinned. Nia and her father walked the harbor path, checking lanterns that had burned through the night. Near the school, Nia found the oil can she had ignored, now empty. She told her father what she had done. He did not scold her. Instead, he handed her a list of neighbors who might need supplies before the next storm. Nia folded the list into her pocket. This time, she began at Mrs. Vale's gate.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What theme develops in the story? Explain how Nia's actions at the beginning and end support your answer.

2. How is Nia a dynamic character? Use one specific event or line of dialogue as evidence.

3. How does the foggy island setting affect the plot and the pacing of the middle paragraph?

4. What does Mrs. Vale's lantern symbolize in the story? Use details from the passage to support your interpretation.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence literary analysis paragraph about the story. State a theme, use two details about Nia's choices as evidence, and explain how her change helps develop that theme.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three details that show how Nia's sense of responsibility changes. Number them 1, 2, and 3 in plot order to trace the story's theme. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What theme develops in the story? Explain how Nia's actions at the beginning and end support your answer.	**A theme is that communities depend on people choosing to help, even when their actions seem small. At first, Nia leaves the oil because she expects someone else to help. At the end, she takes her father's list and begins checking on Mrs. Vale.**
2	How is Nia a dynamic character? Use one specific event or line of dialogue as evidence.	**Nia is dynamic because she changes from avoiding responsibility to accepting it. She first says, "Someone else will help her," but later brings oil to Mrs. Vale and begins helping neighbors before the next storm.**
3	How does the foggy island setting affect the plot and the pacing of the middle paragraph?	**The fog makes the lanterns necessary because people cannot see the road or nearby houses. The danger and Nia's run over wet stones make the middle paragraph feel urgent.**
4	What does Mrs. Vale's lantern symbolize in the story? Use details from the passage to support your interpretation.	**The lantern symbolizes how one person's help can matter to a whole community. Its flame makes the next house visible, then another, showing that a small action can spread safety and connection.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The story develops the theme that a community depends on people choosing to help, even when their actions seem small. At first, Nia leaves Mrs. Vale's oil at her door because she assumes someone else will act. During the fog, lighting Mrs. Vale's lantern shows Nia that one flame can help neighbors see one another. By dawn, Nia accepts her father's list and starts at Mrs. Vale's gate, proving that she now takes responsibility.

Accept equivalent theme statements that are supported by Nia's choices and the lantern imagery. Students should cite or accurately describe at least two relevant details and explain Nia's change rather than only retelling events.