

Theme and Summary

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: ____ / 10



Quick Review

The theme is the big idea or lesson the **WHOLE** story teaches — not just one event. A good summary tells the main events in order and leaves out small details.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Empty Jar

Long ago in a quiet village, an old potter named Bao made the most beautiful jars in the valley. People came from far away to buy them. Bao had one son, Wen, who was clever but lazy. Wen wanted to inherit his father's shop without learning the work.

One spring, Bao gave Wen an empty clay jar. "Fill this jar by harvest time," he said, "with something more valuable than gold." Wen laughed. He dropped a single gold coin into the jar and walked away. Every week he checked the jar, but the coin only made a small, lonely sound at the bottom.

By summer, Wen began to worry. He asked the rice farmer how to grow rice. He asked the weaver how to weave. He asked the baker how to shape bread. He wrote each lesson on a small slip of paper and slid it into the jar. By harvest, the jar was almost full.

When Bao opened the jar, the gold coin fell out first. Then a hundred slips of paper spilled onto the floor. Bao smiled. "You found it," he said. "A skill in your hands is worth more than a coin in your pocket."

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the story to answer each question.

1. Which sentence **BEST** states the theme of the story?
 - A. Hard work always brings wealth in the end.
 - B. A father's gift should never be questioned by his children.
 - C. The skills we learn from others are worth more than the money we hold.
 - D. Children should finish every task a parent gives them.



2. Which detail BEST helped the reader find the theme?
 - A. Wen slid slips of paper about each new skill he learned into the jar.
 - B. Wen dropped a single gold coin into the jar at the start of the season.
 - C. People came from far away to buy Bao's beautiful jars.
 - D. The gold coin made a small, lonely sound at the bottom of the jar.
3. Which is the BEST summary of the story?
 - A. A potter named Bao makes beautiful jars in a quiet village and sells them to people who come from far away.
 - B. A father asks his lazy son to fill a jar with something more valuable than gold; the son learns skills from village workers and fills the jar with what he learns.
 - C. A boy puts a single gold coin in a jar and then waits all summer for the harvest to come.
 - D. A son leaves his father's pottery shop and travels far away to work as a farmer, a weaver, and a baker.
4. Why does Wen at FIRST put only one gold coin in the jar?
 - A. He has no other money to put in the jar besides that one coin.
 - B. He plans to drop more coins in each week until the jar is full.
 - C. He wants to test whether the jar itself is made of real gold.
 - D. He believes money is the most valuable thing and has not yet understood his father.
5. Which event from the story is the TURNING POINT — the moment Wen begins to change?
 - A. When Bao first gives Wen the empty clay jar in the spring.
 - B. When Wen drops the single gold coin into the jar and walks away.
 - C. When Wen begins to worry and starts asking villagers how they do their work.
 - D. When Bao opens the jar at harvest and the slips of paper spill out.
6. Write a one-sentence summary of the story. Use the words father, jar, and skills.

7. Which sentence from the story BEST supports the theme?
 - A. "Bao made the most beautiful jars in the valley."
 - B. "A skill in your hands is worth more than a coin in your pocket."
 - C. "Wen was clever but lazy."
 - D. "He wrote each lesson on a small slip of paper and slid it into the jar."
8. How are Bao and Wen DIFFERENT at the START of the story?
 - A. Bao is patient and skilled; Wen is clever but unwilling to work.
 - B. Bao is wealthy from selling jars; Wen has nothing of his own.
 - C. Bao is kind to the villagers; Wen is rude to the villagers.
 - D. Bao believes in money above all; Wen believes in learning skills.



9. Which is a SMALL detail that would NOT belong in a short summary?
- A. The father gives his son a jar and a challenge in the spring.
 - B. The son learns from a rice farmer, a weaver, and a baker.
 - C. The son fills the jar with slips of paper about what he has learned.
 - D. The single coin makes a small, lonely sound at the bottom of the empty jar.
10. Which other story would teach the MOST similar theme?
- A. A girl spends years practicing the violin every day, then finally plays a solo at a concert.
 - B. A boy digs in his backyard and finds a chest of gold coins by pure luck.
 - C. A king orders his servants to build the tallest tower in the kingdom.
 - D. Two best friends share their lunches at school every single day.



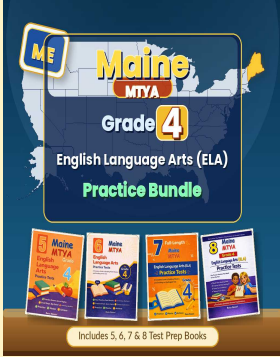
Answer Keys

<p>1 <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input checked="" type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D</p> <p>2 <input checked="" type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D</p> <p>3 <input type="radio"/> A <input checked="" type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D</p> <p>4 <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input checked="" type="radio"/> D</p> <p>5 <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input checked="" type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D</p>	<p>6 <input type="text" value="See below"/></p> <p>7 <input type="radio"/> A <input checked="" type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D</p> <p>8 <input checked="" type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D</p> <p>9 <input type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input checked="" type="radio"/> D</p> <p>10 <input checked="" type="radio"/> A <input type="radio"/> B <input type="radio"/> C <input type="radio"/> D</p>
---	--

Explanations	
1. C	Bao states the theme directly in the last line. A is too narrow — the story is about value, not wealth; B is a common moral but not what THIS story dramatizes; D shrinks the lesson to plain obedience, missing the point about skill vs. money.
2. A	A is the action that DEMONSTRATES the lesson — knowledge replacing coin. B shows the wrong path Wen first took (not the lesson itself); C is setup about Bao's reputation; D is a sound clue that HINTS money is empty, but the actual proof of the theme is the paper-filled jar.
3. B	B names the problem (fill the jar), the rising action (learning from villagers), and the resolution (jar full of lessons). A is only setting; C focuses on a single early event; D invents events — Wen never leaves the village.
4. D	Paragraph 2: he is clever but lazy and LAUGHS at the task — he thinks money is the obvious answer. A contradicts "clever but lazy" (poverty is never stated); B invents a plan the text does not describe; C is a creative misread of the empty jar.
5. C	Paragraph 3 is where Wen STOPS being lazy and STARTS learning. A is the setup (problem given); B is the wrong-path response; D is the climax/reveal AFTER the change has already happened.
6.	Answer: Strong answers name all three elements and the arc: e.g., "A father gives his son an empty jar to fill with something more valuable than gold, and the son fills it with skills he learns from village workers." Also acceptable: any one sentence that names the father's challenge, the jar, and the skills the son learns. NOT acceptable: a sentence that only describes Bao making jars; a sentence about the coin alone; a sentence that uses all three words but misses the lesson (e.g., "The father gave his son a jar full of skills." — too vague); or more than one sentence. Accept any one-sentence summary that names the father, the jar challenge, and the skills.
7. B	B states the theme word-for-word. A is setting; C describes character but doesn't teach a lesson; D shows the theme in action but is not the THEME statement itself.
8. A	Paragraph 1 contrasts them in just these words. B overreaches — wealth is never stated; C invents rudeness toward villagers that the text never shows; D reverses the truth — Wen starts out trusting money, not skill.
9. D	D is a vivid descriptive detail, not part of the main events. A is the setup, B is the rising action, C is the resolution — all are summary-worthy.
10. A	A teaches that earned skill grows over time and is its own reward — the same theme. B is the OPPOSITE (easy money, no skill); C is about pride/ambition; D is about friendship — a different theme.



Want Even More Practice? Check Out Our Other Maine MEA ELA Test Books!




Includes 5, 6, 7 & 8 Test Prep Books

Maine MEA Grade 4 ELA Preparation Bundle

26 full-length practice tests across four books (5 + 6 + 7 + 8)

No repeated questions — maximum practice value!

▼ DOWNLOAD INSTANTLY ▼



SCAN ME

Point your phone camera at the code · instant access to all four books

26 Tests! 4 Books One Bundle

Important: All our test books contain **unique, completely different tests** from each other! Each book offers fresh practice questions — no repeats!

5 Practice Tests	6 Practice Tests	7 Practice Tests	8 Practice Tests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 5 complete practice tests with detailed explanations ✓ Perfect foundation for MEA ELA prep ✓ Builds confidence and test-taking skills ✓ High-quality questions aligned with standards <p>Start your practice journey!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 6 complete practice tests with detailed explanations ✓ Unique tests — different from the 5 tests book ✓ Perfect for more practice after mastering 5 tests ✓ Same high-quality questions aligned with standards <p>Take your practice to the next level!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 7 complete practice tests for deeper preparation ✓ Unique tests — different from 5 and 6 tests books ✓ Builds stamina with full-length practice ✓ Aligned to Grade 4 MEA ELA standards <p>Maximum preparation power!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 8 complete practice tests — our largest book ✓ Unique tests — different from 5, 6 and 7 books ✓ Great for final review before test day ✓ Builds true test stamina and confidence <p>Be fully prepared!</p>

Get the bundle at [EffortlessMath.com](https://www.EffortlessMath.com) — scan the QR code above to open the product page.