

# Theme and Summary in Stories, Drama, and Poetry

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Score: \_\_\_\_\_ / 10



## Quick Review

A theme is the **BIG IDEA** the whole text teaches — not just one event. A summary names the main events in order and leaves out small details. A theme is usually a sentence; a topic (like "family") is just a word.

### PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

## The Lantern Festival

Every autumn, the village of Liantai held a lantern festival on the last warm night of the year. Children carried paper lanterns down to the river, made wishes, and floated them on the slow black water until the whole bend looked like a second sky. For as long as anyone could remember, the most beautiful lantern had been made by Old Mister Han, a quiet man who lived alone in a cottage at the edge of the bamboo grove.

This year, Mister Han did not come to the river. He had been ill all summer, and by autumn his hands shook so badly that he could not fold the thin paper. When the festival began, the children waited a long time on the riverbank, hoping he would walk down the path with his lantern as he always had. He did not come.

A girl named Mei-Lin set down her own lantern and ran back through the village. She knocked on Mister Han's door and asked if she could sit with him. He nodded. Then she asked, very politely, if he could **TEACH** her — not do the folding, just show her where to make each crease. Mister Han hesitated. Then he reached for a sheet of red paper and laid it flat on the table.

It took them most of the night. Mei-Lin's lantern was crooked at the top and a little square at the bottom, and it did not look anything like Mister Han's old lanterns. But when she finally carried it down to the river, the other children gathered around. They did not gather because the lantern was beautiful. They gathered because it was **THERE**.

### PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the passage to answer each question.

- Which sentence **BEST** states the theme of the passage?
  - A skilled artist should never let an illness stop their work.
  - Keeping a tradition alive can matter more than keeping it perfect.
  - Children should always learn crafts from the oldest person in the village.
  - The most beautiful object at a festival deserves the most attention.



2. What is MOST LIKELY the reason the author wrote, "They did not gather because the lantern was beautiful. They gathered because it was THERE"?
- A. To show that the children were polite even when they were disappointed.
  - B. To remind the reader that Mister Han's old lanterns were the most beautiful.
  - C. To highlight that continuing the tradition meant more than how the lantern looked.
  - D. To explain that the river was too dark for anyone to see the lantern clearly.
3. Which sentence is the BEST summary of the passage?
- A. When Mister Han is too ill to make the village's lantern, Mei-Lin asks him to teach her, and she carries her own lantern to the river so the festival can go on.
  - B. Mister Han is a quiet man who lives in a cottage near the bamboo grove and has made beautiful lanterns for many years.
  - C. Mei-Lin makes a crooked lantern that does not look like the old man's lanterns at all, and she takes it down to the river.
  - D. Every autumn, the village of Liantai holds a lantern festival on the last warm night of the year, and children float lanterns on the river.
4. Which detail from the summary in choice A would MOST LIKELY be LEFT OUT to make the summary even shorter?
- A. that Mister Han is too ill to make the lantern
  - B. that Mei-Lin asks him to teach her
  - C. that the festival can go on
  - D. the name "Mei-Lin"
5. How does paragraph 3 MOST contribute to the theme?
- A. It shows that Mister Han does not want company and has to be talked into helping.
  - B. It explains that Mei-Lin is a very skilled lantern-maker even before this night.
  - C. It shows the moment a child takes responsibility for keeping the tradition going.
  - D. It proves that the village had no other adults who could fold paper lanterns.
6. Which sentence is NOT a good summary statement of the passage because it includes a detail too small to belong?
- A. Mei-Lin asks Mister Han to teach her how to fold a lantern, and she finishes one in time for the festival.
  - B. When Mister Han cannot fold the festival lantern, Mei-Lin learns from him and brings a lantern to the river so the tradition continues.
  - C. Mei-Lin used a sheet of RED paper that Mister Han laid flat on his table, and the other children gathered around her.
  - D. After Mister Han is too ill to make a lantern, a child learns to fold one with his help and carries it to the river.



7. Which choice BEST states the TOPIC of the passage (not the theme)?
- A. Hard work always pays off in beautiful results.
  - B. A village festival and a girl who steps in to help.
  - C. Children should respect their elders no matter what.
  - D. It is wrong to start a tradition you cannot finish.
8. Which line from the passage MOST DIRECTLY hints at the theme?
- A. "Every autumn, the village of Liantai held a lantern festival on the last warm night of the year."
  - B. "His hands shook so badly that he could not fold the thin paper."
  - C. "Then she asked, very politely, if he could TEACH her — not do the folding, just show her where to make each crease."
  - D. "Mei-Lin's lantern was crooked at the top and a little square at the bottom..."
9. In your own words, write a one-sentence theme for this passage. Then list the two events from the story that BEST support that theme.

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10. A classmate writes this summary: "Mei-Lin made a crooked red lantern at Mister Han's house." Explain TWO things that are missing from this summary.

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## Answer Keys

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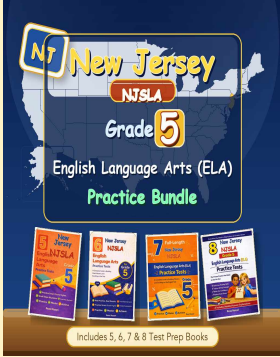
| Explanations |   |
|--------------|---|
| <b>1. B</b>  | The lantern is crooked, but the tradition continues because Mei-Lin tried — that is the lesson the WHOLE story teaches. A blames Mister Han for being sick; C shrinks the lesson to a rule about teachers; D is the OPPOSITE of what the ending shows (people gather because it is there, not because it is best).  |
| <b>2. C</b>  | The two sentences set up a deliberate contrast — looks vs. presence — to point at the theme. A reads disappointment the text does not show; B uses the line to praise Mister Han instead of the act; D invents a darkness detail not in the text.   |
| <b>3. A</b>  | A names the main problem (illness), the response (asking to be taught), and the result (festival continues) — full arc, no extra detail. B summarizes the SETUP only; C summarizes only the ending event; D summarizes only the SETTING — none of these is the full story.  |
| <b>4. D</b>  | A truly short summary keeps the problem, the action, and the outcome and may drop minor details like a single character's name. A is the inciting problem; B is the action that drives the story; C is the resolution — these three are the spine and must stay.  |
| <b>5. C</b>  | Mei-Lin running back, knocking, and asking to be TAUGHT is the moment that turns the story toward its theme. A misreads "hesitated" as unwilling; B contradicts paragraph 4 (her lantern is crooked); D adds an unsupported claim about the whole village.  |
| <b>6. C</b>  | The color of the paper is a vivid story detail but not necessary to a summary. A, B, and D all keep the main spine (problem + action + result) without small details.   |
| <b>7. B</b>  | A topic is the WHAT in a few words; "a village festival and a girl who steps in to help" names the subject without stating a lesson. A, C, and D try to teach a lesson — those are themes (and B is the only true topic).   |
| <b>8. C</b>  | The theme is that keeping a tradition alive can matter more than keeping it perfect. Line C is the exact moment Mei-Lin chooses to LEARN the tradition rather than ask Mister Han to fix the problem for her — it is the action that PASSES the tradition on, which IS the theme in motion. A only names the setting where the tradition happens; B shows the problem but no response; D shows the result (imperfection) but not the choice that made it possible — all hint at parts of the story without showing the pivot. |



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| 9.  | <p><b>Answer:</b> Strong answer — theme: "Keeping a tradition alive can matter more than keeping it perfect," or "What we do for our community matters more than how skilled we are," or similar one-sentence lessons. Strong supporting events (any two): (1) Mister Han cannot make the lantern this year because he is ill; (2) Mei-Lin asks to be taught so she can make one in his place; (3) the children gather around her crooked lantern not because it is beautiful but because it is there. NOT acceptable: a one-WORD topic like "helping" or "tradition" instead of a sentence; events that come from outside the story; "Mister Han was old" as an event.</p> <p>A theme is a full sentence about life. The events you pick should make that sentence FEEL true.</p> |
| 10. | <p><b>Answer:</b> Strong answer names two of: (1) the PROBLEM — Mister Han is too ill to make the festival lantern; (2) the REASON Mei-Lin goes to him — to keep the tradition going / to be TAUGHT, not just to make any lantern; (3) the OUTCOME — she carries the lantern to the river and the festival continues. Acceptable: any clear pair of those three pieces. NOT acceptable: pointing out that the color is wrong (red is correct), or that the summary is short (length is not the issue), or that the classmate did not say it was crooked at the top (too small a detail).</p> <p>Compare the classmate's sentence to the full story arc — what is left out: problem, reason, or result?</p>   |



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