Theme and Objective Summary

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

A theme is a complete sentence about a lesson the WHOLE text teaches — not a topic word like "family" and not a summary of events. An objective summary names the main events without adding your own opinion ("sadly," "luckily," "the best part").

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Apprentice Baker

When Mariana arrived at the Concha Dorada bakery for her first morning of work, she expected to be handed an apron and a recipe. Instead, Señora Ofelia, the owner, handed her a paper bag of stale bread and a wooden spoon. "For one week," the señora said, "you will not bake anything. You will walk to the plaza every morning and feed the pigeons. Then you will come back and stir whatever I tell you to stir." Mariana had spent two years convincing her parents to let her take this apprenticeship instead of finishing summer school, and the bag of stale bread felt like a small, soft insult.

On the first day, she fed the pigeons quickly, embarrassed. On the third day, she lingered, because an old man at the next bench was sketching the birds and looked up to say good morning. On the fifth day, she noticed for the first time that the pigeons on the south side of the plaza came running before she even opened the bag, because they recognized her shoes. By Friday, when she returned to the bakery, Señora Ofelia did not ask how the pigeons were. She asked, instead, what Mariana had seen in the plaza that morning. Mariana described the old man, the south-side pigeons, the woman who set out cups of water for the dogs, and the way the sun, by 8:15, lit the corner of the cathedral from inside.

Señora Ofelia nodded, as though this had been the lesson all along. She handed Mariana a real apron then, and a recipe card for sweet rolls — but the recipe had no measurements on it. "A baker who does not see her neighborhood," the señora said, "will bake the wrong bread for it. Today you tell me how much sugar these rolls should have. Tomorrow we will see if you were right." Mariana looked at the card, then out the bakery window at the plaza she now knew the way she had not known it on Monday, and she began, carefully, to measure.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the passage to answer each question.

1. Which sentence BEST states a THEME of the passage?

A. A skilled baker should always follow a recipe exactly.

B. To do creative work well, a person must first learn to pay attention to the world around her.

C. Adults often waste young people's time with pointless tasks.

D. The best apprentices are the ones who never question their teacher.

2. Which choice is the BEST objective summary of the passage?

A. Señora Ofelia is a wise old woman who teaches Mariana what really matters in life and helps her grow into a better person who learns to love her neighborhood.

B. Mariana starts an apprenticeship expecting to bake, but her teacher first sends her to feed pigeons in the plaza for a week; on Friday, after Mariana describes what she has noticed there, the teacher gives her an apron and a recipe with no measurements.

C. Mariana feeds pigeons every morning while an old man on the next bench sketches them, and the south-side pigeons learn to recognize her shoes by the fifth day.

D. A young apprentice walks to the plaza every day for a week and slowly comes to know her neighborhood very well before she ever steps into the bakery's kitchen.

3. Which choice is the TOPIC of the passage, not the theme?

A. Working hard always pays off in the end.

B. A young apprentice and the unusual first week of her training.

C. Adults should give children real responsibility right away.

D. Paying attention is more important than following directions.

4. Which detail from the summary in choice B of question 2 would MOST LIKELY be DROPPED in an even shorter summary?

A. that Mariana expected to bake

B. that the teacher first sends her to feed pigeons

C. that the recipe at the end has no measurements

D. that the assignment lasts a week

5. How does paragraph 2 MOST contribute to the theme?

A. It shows Mariana doing a chore she is forced to do without ever changing.

B. It shows Mariana gradually learning to NOTICE the people and details of the plaza.

C. It proves that Señora Ofelia regrets the assignment she gave Mariana.

D. It reveals that pigeons are smarter than most people believe they are.

6. Which sentence is a WEAK summary of the passage because it adds the writer's personal opinion?

A. Mariana arrives expecting to bake but is sent to feed pigeons; after a week of noticing the plaza, she is given a real apron and a recipe without measurements.

B. Mariana's first week of training is the most beautiful and moving week of her young life, and Señora Ofelia is wonderful for giving her this gift.

C. After being sent to feed pigeons for a week, Mariana describes what she has seen in the plaza and is then given an apron and a recipe.

D. A new apprentice spends her first week observing the plaza before her teacher allows her to begin baking.

7. Which line from the passage MOST DIRECTLY hints at the theme?

A. "For one week, you will not bake anything."

B. "A baker who does not see her neighborhood will bake the wrong bread for it."

C. "The bag of stale bread felt like a small, soft insult."

D. "By Friday, when she returned to the bakery, Señora Ofelia did not ask how the pigeons were."

8. Which choice gives a theme that is TRUE about the world but NOT supported by THIS text?

A. Real learning often looks different from what a student expects at first.

B. An older mentor can guide a younger person without explaining her reasons right away.

C. Hard physical labor will always make a person more humble than easier work.

D. Doing creative work well requires paying attention to your community.

9. Write a one-sentence theme for the passage in your own words. Then list the two events from the text that BEST support that theme.

_____

_____

10. A classmate writes this summary: "Mariana fed pigeons in the plaza and then got an apron from a nice old lady." Explain TWO things this summary is missing or doing wrong.

_____

_____

Answer Keys

1	A	**B**	C	D	6	A	**B**	C	D
2	A	**B**	C	D	7	A	**B**	C	D
3	A	**B**	C	D	8	A	B	**C**	D
4	A	B	C	**D**	9	See below			
5	A	**B**	C	D	10	See below			

Explanations

1. B	The whole arc — pigeons, plaza, then a measurement-free recipe — teaches that observation must come BEFORE craft. A is the OPPOSITE of the empty recipe card; C reads bitterness the text contradicts (the lesson works); D praises obedience, but Mariana's growth comes from NOTICING, not from being obedient.
2. B	B names the setup (expects to bake), the assignment (feed pigeons), the turn (describes what she noticed), and the result (real apron + measurement-free recipe) — full arc, no opinion words. A adds judgments ("wise," "what really matters"); C is only the middle, no arc; D mostly summarizes the pigeon-feeding without the bakery turn, and it adds the opinion word "slowly."
3. B	A topic answers "what is this about?" in a phrase — apprentice + unusual first week. A, C, and D each try to teach a life lesson, which makes them themes (good or bad).
4. D	A tight summary keeps the SETUP (expecting to bake), the SURPRISE (pigeons instead), and the RESULT (a no-measurement recipe). The exact length of the assignment is a minor detail that can fall away without losing the arc.
5. B	Each day shows more attention: quick → lingering → recognizing shoes → describing the cathedral light at 8:15 — exactly the skill the theme names. A misses the day-by-day change in the paragraph; C invents regret in a person who never appears in paragraph 2; D is a narrow side-detail, not the lesson the WHOLE text teaches.
6. B	"Most beautiful and moving" and "wonderful" are personal judgments — those words break the objective rule. A, C, and D each report what HAPPENS without telling the reader how to feel about it.
7. B	Señora Ofelia's line names the lesson directly: knowing the place comes BEFORE the craft. A names the rule but not the reason for it; C is Mariana's early frustration, the opposite of the theme; D is a turning-point detail but does not state the lesson.
8. C	Choice C might be a true belief somewhere, but THIS text never shows hard physical labor — pigeon-feeding is not strenuous, and the lesson is about observation, not exhaustion. A, B, and D each match details in the actual passage.

9.	**Answer:** Strong theme sentences: "To do creative work well, a person must first learn to pay attention to her world," or "A craft begins with seeing your community, not with following a recipe," or similar full-sentence lessons. Strong supporting events (any two): (1) Señora Ofelia sends Mariana to feed pigeons instead of letting her bake; (2) by Friday, Mariana describes specific, careful details about the plaza (the man sketching, the south-side pigeons, the cathedral light at 8:15); (3) the señora hands Mariana a recipe with no measurements and asks her to decide how much sugar to use. NOT acceptable: one-word topics like "observation" or "baking"; events not in the text; "Señora Ofelia is wise" as an event. A theme is a full sentence about life. The events you pick should make that sentence FEEL true in this story.
10.	**Answer:** Strong answers name two of the following: (1) it leaves out WHY she was sent to feed pigeons — the lesson about noticing the neighborhood — which is the heart of the story; (2) it leaves out the RESULT — the recipe with no measurements and the señora asking Mariana to decide on the sugar; (3) it adds the opinion word "nice," which is not objective; (4) it leaves out the SETUP — Mariana expected to bake from day one. Acceptable: any clear pair of those. NOT acceptable: "the summary is too short" without naming what is missing; pointing out that pigeons are not in the plaza (they are); complaining that the word "old" is unkind. Compare this sentence to the full story arc — what is missing (setup, lesson, result) AND what opinion word slips in?

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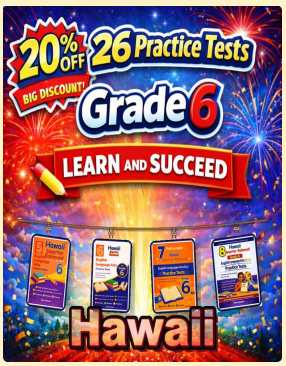

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