Theme and Its Development Over the Text

Name: _____	Date: _____	Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

At Grade 7, a theme is a complete sentence about a lesson the WHOLE text teaches — and you must also explain HOW that theme is developed across the passage, not just where it appears. Watch for the way a character's understanding shifts from paragraph to paragraph. An objective summary names events without judgments.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Editor of the Sixth Grade Paper

When Anaya was promoted to editor-in-chief of the middle school newspaper, she discovered that almost every decision the position required was the kind of decision she most hated to make. The teacher-advisor, Mr. Iwu, had handed her a binder of submissions on a Tuesday afternoon and said, "Six pages, by Friday. You decide what runs and what doesn't." Anaya had wanted the editor job for a year. Holding the binder, she understood for the first time that wanting a job and being able to do it were two separate skills.

Her first decision was the easiest. A short article about the new vending machine was clean, funny, and three hundred words long; she marked it for page one without hesitating. Her second decision was harder. A long essay by a seventh-grader named Jeremiah argued that the school's hallway clocks were all set to slightly different times, and that this was a small but real disrespect of student attention. The essay was thoughtful, but it ran nine hundred words for what was, Anaya knew, a six-hundred-word slot. Cutting it would feel like editing the writer's mind. Letting it run uncut would push two other pieces off the paper entirely.

Anaya carried the binder home and read every submission twice. By Wednesday night, she had a layout that included Jeremiah's essay at six hundred words; she had written the cuts in pencil, lightly, the way her own English teacher had once edited her stories. On Thursday morning, she met Jeremiah in the hallway before homeroom. She did not start by listing what she had cut. She started by naming the two sentences she thought were the best in the whole piece, and only then opened the binder. Jeremiah looked at the pencil marks for a long time. Then he said, slowly, "You kept the clock part." She nodded. He nodded back.

On Friday afternoon, the paper went to the printer at six pages — five articles, two photographs, and a small editor's note in the bottom corner of page two. The note thanked the writers whose pieces had not been chosen this issue and named the issues those pieces would appear in next. Mr. Iwu read the proof in his classroom, smiled the small smile he reserved for work that surprised him, and said nothing. Anaya, sitting at the back of the room with her math homework open, understood that the smile and the silence were the praise. She also understood that next Tuesday a new binder would arrive, and that she would have to learn this lesson, in small new versions, every week she held this job.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the passage to answer each question.

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

A. A leader earns trust by making fair decisions and by treating the people affected by those decisions with care.

B. Students should always be promoted to leadership positions before they ask for them.

C. The most important job of a newspaper editor is filling exactly six pages every week.

D. School newspapers are usually written by adults, not by students.

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

A. Anaya is promoted to editor of the school paper and discovers that wanting a job is not the same as being able to do it; over one week, she chooses what to print, cuts an essay carefully, explains her decisions to its writer, and finishes the issue with a thoughtful editor's note.

B. A wonderful young girl named Anaya becomes the brilliant editor of her middle school newspaper and surprises everyone with how perfectly she handles every single decision.

C. Anaya cuts a nine-hundred-word essay down to six hundred words and meets the writer Jeremiah in the hallway before homeroom on Thursday morning.

D. Mr. Iwu hands Anaya a binder of submissions and asks her to fill six pages by Friday, which she does.

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

A. Editing other people's work means choosing what to keep and what to let go.

B. A new editor in her first week running a school newspaper.

C. Hard decisions are easier when you treat people with respect.

D. Real leadership requires both judgment and care.

4. How does paragraph 2 MOST contribute to the DEVELOPMENT of the theme?

A. It shows Anaya quickly finishing her work and moving on without difficulty.

B. It introduces a SPECIFIC hard choice — cutting a thoughtful essay — that the theme of fair leadership will now have to address in the next paragraph.

C. It proves that Jeremiah is a difficult writer who does not deserve to be in the paper.

D. It changes the subject of the passage from editing to vending machines.

5. How does paragraph 3 ADVANCE the theme more than paragraph 2 does?

A. It DELIVERS the theme by showing Anaya making the cut AND explaining it in a way that respects Jeremiah — the work and the care together.

B. It contradicts the theme by showing that Anaya gives up on the project entirely.

C. It replaces the original theme with a new one about friendship.

D. It repeats paragraph 2 with no new information.

6. What does the editor's NOTE in paragraph 4 add to the theme?

A. It removes any responsibility from Anaya for the choices she made that week.

B. It extends the theme beyond Jeremiah — care for ALL writers whose pieces did not run becomes a piece of the same fair-leadership idea.

C. It proves the editor's note is the most important part of any school newspaper.

D. It changes the theme from leadership to friendship.

7. Which LINE from the passage MOST DIRECTLY hints at the theme of the whole text?

A. "Six pages, by Friday. You decide what runs and what doesn't."

B. "She did not start by listing what she had cut. She started by naming the two sentences she thought were the best in the whole piece."

C. "A short article about the new vending machine was clean, funny, and three hundred words long."

D. "On Friday afternoon, the paper went to the printer at six pages."

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

A. Leadership often means making decisions that affect other people, not just yourself.

B. Doing a job well includes the way you talk to the people the job affects.

C. The youngest person in a leadership role will always make better decisions than older adults.

D. Wanting a job and being able to do it are two separate skills you must develop.

9. Write a one-sentence theme for the passage in your own words. Then explain in 2-3 sentences HOW the theme develops across the four paragraphs (what each paragraph adds).

_____

_____

10. A classmate writes this summary: "Anaya was a great editor who was very kind to Jeremiah and made the school paper wonderful." Identify TWO things this summary does wrong as an OBJECTIVE summary.

_____

_____

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. A	The whole arc — the hard cut on Jeremiah's essay AND the way Anaya tells him about it AND the editor's note thanking writers not chosen — develops the same lesson about fair leadership PLUS care. B is invented advice; C is a logistical fact, not a lesson; D contradicts the passage.
2. A	A captures the SETUP (promotion, the realization), the MIDDLE (decisions, the cut, the conversation), and the RESULT (the issue + editor's note) without opinion words. B is full of judgments ("wonderful," "brilliant," "perfectly"); C is one middle moment only; D names the assignment and the result but skips Anaya's growth entirely.
3. B	A topic answers "what is this about?" — new editor + first week. A, C, and D each try to teach a life lesson, which makes them themes (some stronger than others).
4. B	The Jeremiah essay sets the precise problem the theme must solve — a real, hard editorial choice. A misses the difficulty the paragraph plainly names; C invents a judgment of Jeremiah the text does not make; D mistakes one easy article (the vending-machine piece) for the paragraph's actual focus.
5. A	Paragraph 2 names the problem; paragraph 3 shows the SOLUTION — light pencil cuts plus the conversation that starts with praise. That is the development. B contradicts the text; C invents a new theme; D ignores the new moves.
6. B	Naming the writers whose pieces did NOT run, and telling them when they WILL, applies the same fairness to the writers Anaya never met in the hallway. A reverses the meaning; C overclaims about editor's notes in general; D invents a different theme.
7. B	Starting with praise before cuts IS the lesson in one sentence — the work is done with care. A is the assignment; C is one easy decision; D is the result, but not the lesson.
8. C	Choice C may sound flattering, but THIS text never compares Anaya to older adults — and Mr. Iwu, the adult, is shown approving her, not failing himself. A, B, and D each match details in the actual passage.
9.	**Answer:** Strong theme sentences: "A leader must combine fair decisions with care for the people affected," or "Holding a job means learning that wanting it and being able to do it are different skills," or similar full-sentence lessons. Strong development descriptions: paragraph 1 sets up the realization (wanting vs. doing); paragraph 2 introduces the hard case (Jeremiah's essay) that will test the lesson; paragraph 3 delivers the lesson in action (light cuts + starting with praise); paragraph 4 extends the lesson to every writer (the editor's note) AND signals that the lesson must be relearned weekly. NOT acceptable: themes that are one-word topics ("editing," "leadership"); summaries instead of development descriptions; answers that name only one paragraph. A theme is a full sentence. Each paragraph should add something — setup, problem, solution, extension.

10.	**Answer:** Strong answers name two of the following: (1) "great," "very kind," and "wonderful" are opinion words — an objective summary should describe what happens without telling the reader how to feel; (2) it leaves out the SETUP — Anaya is new to the job and discovers wanting and doing are different; (3) it leaves out the SPECIFIC decision (cutting a 900-word essay to 600 words) that gives the story its shape; (4) it leaves out the RESULT — the finished six-page paper AND the editor's note thanking other writers. Acceptable: any clear pair. NOT acceptable: "it is too short" without specifics; complaining that Jeremiah deserved more space. Look for opinion words AND for missing chunks of the arc (setup, problem, solution, result).

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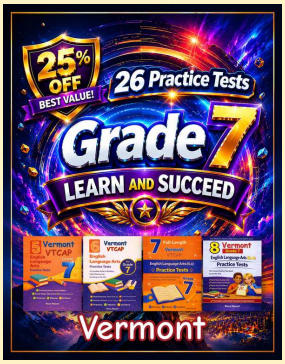

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