

Determining Theme or Central Idea

CCLS

RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details . . .

A Time to Change

Did you ever read a story and learn an important lesson from the story’s key events? Have you been able to learn from the situations certain characters face? Often authors present a **theme**, or main message of a text. The theme is the lesson about life that an author wants you to think about. To identify a theme, first determine the **central idea**, or what the story is mostly about. Look at the picture below and think about its message.



Look carefully at the picture and the caption. They tell about how someone becomes a most improved player. Circle the details and words that help you figure out the lesson about life the picture conveys. Then read the chart below to see how these details can help you figure out the picture’s theme.

Important Details	Theme
soccer player, worst on team	Hard work pays off.
practiced hard	
became most improved player	

Determining a text’s theme is like putting together pieces of a puzzle. If you can carefully assemble the important details, you can determine the central idea and understand the author’s message.



Read the first three paragraphs of a story about Tiana and her fear of dogs. Then read and answer the question that follows.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Tiana’s Scar *by Maria Kane*

When she was five years old, Tiana was bitten by Rex, her uncle’s dog. The bite left a small scar on Tiana’s finger.

Now 11, Tiana still avoids dogs wherever she goes. Every morning, Tiana walks an extra block to school to avoid walking by her neighbor’s dog, Millie. Millie lies quietly behind a locked gate and doesn’t bark much, but Tiana insists on avoiding the dog at all costs.

When her best friend, Kim, laughed at Tiana’s extra hike one morning, Tiana exclaimed, “I don’t care what you think! Passing a ferocious beast is not how I want to start my day.”

“OK, calm down, Tiana,” Kim responded as Tiana rushed away angrily. *(continued)*

What is this part of the story about?

The author may not state the central idea of a story directly. Good readers identify key details about the main character and important events to figure out what a story is mostly about.

Look for important details in the text that show what the story is mostly about. Two of the details are given below. Write down another detail and the central idea in the space provided.

Important Details	Central Idea
Tiana was bitten by a dog at age 5.	
Tiana has a scar on her finger from the dog bite.	

With a partner, discuss details about Tiana’s actions and feelings. Take turns explaining what these details may reveal about the central idea of this story.



Close Reading

Underline important details. Find the sentence that shows Tiana is changing.

Continue reading Tiana’s story. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

(continued from page 70)

One day, Tiana’s class took a field trip to an animal shelter. The tour guide explained different types of dogs and their behaviors. Tiana asked the guide many questions and described her fear of dogs. “You should never act scared of a dog,” the guide explained. “If you walk calmly and with confidence, dogs are less likely to bark at you.” The guide demonstrated this for Tiana and her class.

Walking home from school that day, Tiana decided to be brave and give it a try. She walked confidently past Millie. At first, the dog stood up and stared, but when it saw Tiana holding her head high, it sat down quietly. Tiana felt proud—and not scared at all.

Hint

Which choice best sums up the main message of the story?

Circle the correct answer.

What sentence below best expresses a theme of this story?

- A** Knowledge can help a person overcome fears.
- B** Friends stand by you even when times are tough.
- C** Dogs only bark at people who act scared.
- D** Confidence does not help people solve problems.



Show Your Thinking

Look at the answer you chose above. Explain which details from the story helped to convey this theme.



Choose an incorrect answer. Explain to a partner why it is NOT a theme of the story.



Read the text. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.



Maybe the author is giving clues about the theme by showing how the main character changes. I'm going to underline sentences that show the main character's feelings change.

Close Reading

Why does the narrator think the family trip will be boring? **Underline** the sentence that explains why the narrator is not looking forward to the trip.

What is the narrator's final opinion of Mount Rushmore as a place to see and visit? **Circle** words or phrases that describe the narrator's opinion at the end of the story.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Rushmore *by Mark Santiago*

- 1 This summer, my parents planned a trip for us to visit Mount Rushmore. Our sixth-grade class had studied Mount Rushmore, and a visit there sounded really boring. Last summer, we went to a theme park, and I went on about fifty rides. Now I was supposed to enjoy staring at a huge carved rock?
- 2 As we drove to the airport, I prepared myself for the boredom that I would have to endure over the next week. A few hours later, we landed in Rapid City, and we spent the afternoon driving through a wildlife park, where we saw all kinds of amazing creatures. I was starting to think this trip might not be a huge waste of time after all.
- 3 Seeing the animals was fascinating, but nothing could prepare me for what we saw the next day. We drove about 30 miles to Mount Rushmore. I knew that Mount Rushmore was a mountain with the faces of the presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln carved into its side. I've seen statues of famous people before. I didn't know why these would be any different, but boy did I find out!
- 4 When I saw the monument for the first time, I felt frozen in my tracks. Mount Rushmore is simply majestic. The size of the carvings is astonishing—each head is about 60 feet high! I never thought anything could top the theme park adventure I had last year, but now I know that sometimes a big rock can actually take my breath away.



Hints

Which sentence describes how the narrator initially feels about the trip to Mount Rushmore?

Think about why the narrator’s feelings about the summer vacation have changed.

What aspects of the trip surprise the narrator? What can readers learn from the narrator’s feelings about the trip?

Look at your marked-up text. Then use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1** In this story, the narrator’s feelings are clues about the story’s central idea. Which sentence from the story shares an important detail about the author’s feelings?
 - A** “Last summer, we went to a theme park and I went on about fifty rides.”
 - B** “Our sixth-grade class had studied Mount Rushmore, and a visit there sounded really boring.”
 - C** “This summer, my parents planned a trip for us to visit Mount Rushmore.”
 - D** “I’ve seen statues of famous people before.”

- 2** What is the central idea of the story?
 - A** The narrator had a great experience on a trip that was supposed to be boring.
 - B** Many people think Mount Rushmore is a great place to visit in the summer.
 - C** Visiting a wildlife park can be dangerous but fun.
 - D** It’s important to plan a vacation far in advance to avoid hassles.

- 3** Identify the theme of this story. Include at least one detail from the story to support the theme.



Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

Vivian's Move

by Miguel Pereira

1 On a gray, rainy morning, Vivian waved goodbye to the red door she had walked through for the last time. She waved goodbye to her bus stop, which looked lonely in the rain. She waved goodbye to her favorite bakery, the grocery store, and the neighborhood softball field, which was a swirl of cold, brown mud. She waved goodbye to the frozen Charles River, and a tear fell down her face as she watched Boston vanish in the rearview mirror of the truck they had rented to move their lives across the country.

2 Vivian had known for over six months that she was going to move to San Francisco, but she didn't want to believe it. Boston had been her home since she was born; it was all she knew, and she loved it. After all, Boston had the best Italian food, beautiful buildings, subways, and—most importantly—her friends. What would she do in a new city without her friends?

3 For the past couple of months, Vivian and her dad had been reading about San Francisco and California. He wanted her to be excited, but she didn't care that San Francisco was on a beautiful bay with scenic hills. She didn't care that the city was known for having some of the best food in the world. She didn't care about the spectacular Golden Gate Bridge and the warmer winters. Boston was beautiful and had wonderful restaurants, and she adored the fall leaves and the snowy winters.

4 Vivian and her dad took two and a half weeks to drive to San Francisco. By the time they crossed the California state line, they had driven through twelve states, four mountain ranges, three national parks, and countless cities and towns. Vivian felt exhausted from the long trip, and now she had to face the reality of why she was on the trip in the first place: California was her new home.

5 The book that said San Francisco is hilly was right. Vivian thought that “hilly” was an understatement. She felt like she was on a roller coaster as they drove through the steep hills of the city. She thought it was too bad that San Francisco didn't get snow like Boston does. These hills would be amazing for sledding! On the other hand, she thought about how much more fun the double-seated bike that she and her dad rode around Boston would be on these hills—at least going down!

6 After driving around for a while, Vivian's dad stopped the truck at the top of a hill in front of a house with a pink door. Her dad wasn't particularly excited about the bubble-gum-colored entrance, but Vivian was thrilled. The red door on their house in Boston suddenly didn't feel so far away. She ran through the door, up the stairs, and into the second room on the right, just like her dad had explained. This was her room, and it was perfect. It had blue walls, a slanted ceiling, and a circle window that looked out on the street. The movers already had set up her bed in the room. San Francisco was starting to feel more like home every minute.

7 Vivian and her dad left their new house after several hours of unpacking to find somewhere to eat dinner. They found themselves in a part of town called North Beach. Vivian smiled when she saw restaurants with names like Mama Mia and Mangia Bene, and red, white, and green flags hanging in the windows. She was delighted to smell the delicious aromas floating in the air. She recognized that this was the Italian section of town and couldn't believe how similar it was to the North End in Boston.



8 Before going home, Vivian and her dad decided to take a trolley car to a nearby beach. They wanted to watch the sun set on their first day in San Francisco. When Vivian stepped off the trolley, she saw the waves lapping onto the beach in front of the silhouette of the Golden Gate Bridge. She wondered if it were possible for San Francisco to be as wonderful as Boston. So far, San Francisco was pretty great. She let out a sigh as she watched the sun turn colors and fade away. She thought about how her friends in Boston were probably asleep, and she wondered what new friends she would meet in San Francisco.

Answer Form

- 1 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 2 (A) (B) (C) (D)
- 3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

Number Correct / 3

1

Which sentence helps convey the central idea that Vivian is changing her mind about the move?

- A** "On a gray, rainy morning, Vivian waved goodbye to the red door she had walked through for the last time."
- B** "San Francisco was starting to feel more like home every minute."
- C** "For the past couple of months, Vivian and her dad had been reading about San Francisco and California."
- D** "Boston was beautiful and had wonderful restaurants, and she adored the fall leaves and the snowy winters."

2

What is the central idea of paragraph 3?

- A** Vivian's dad thinks San Francisco is better than Boston.
- B** San Francisco doesn't get snow like Boston does.
- C** Vivian doesn't want to leave Boston for San Francisco.
- D** Only Vivian loves the fall and the winter seasons.

Determining Theme or Central Idea

Theme: *A Time to Change*

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- Determine the theme of a literary text.
- Determine the central idea of a literary text.
- Make inferences.
- Identify relevant details.

THE LEARNING PROGRESSION

- **Grade 5:** CCLS RL.5.2 requires students to find the theme of the text only, not the central idea.
- **Grade 6:** CCLS RL.6.2 builds on the Grade 5 standard by requiring students not only to find the theme but also to identify supporting details in the text that help to develop the theme or central idea.
- **Grade 7:** CCLS RL.7.2 requires students to analyze how the theme and central idea develop over the course of the text.

PREREQUISITE SKILLS

- Determine the theme of a story.
- Identify details in a text.
- Recognize how characters in a story respond to challenges that they face.

TAP STUDENTS' PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

- Tell students that they will be working on a lesson about theme. Ask students to review what a theme is. (*The main message or lesson in a text*)
- Point out to students that a theme is different from the topic or central idea of a text. A topic or central idea is what the text is mostly about. A theme is a message that an author wants readers to learn by reading the text.
- Encourage students to think about their favorite movie. Invite a volunteer to share the name of a movie that most students in the class have seen.
- Ask students to explain what the movie is mostly about, including who the main characters are and what happens to them.
- Write on the board some of the important details about the movie. Then guide students in using these words to identify the theme of the movie. Ask, What is the main lesson about life that the movie teaches? How does knowing the movie's central idea help you understand its theme? Have students use the key details recorded on the board to state the theme of the movie.
- Point out to students that just like movies, fictional stories have a theme. Explain that understanding the theme of a text will help them better understand the author's purpose, and it will also help them to connect the text to their own lives and experiences.

Ready Toolbox

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	Prerequisite Skills	RL.6.2
Ready Lessons	✓ ✓	✓
Tools for Instruction	✓	✓
Interactive Tutorials	✓	✓

CCLS Focus

RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details.

ADDITIONAL STANDARDS: RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3, RL.6.4, RL.6.7; W.6.3.b, W.6.7, W.6.9.a, W.6.11; SL.6.1, SL.6.2, SL.6.4, SL.6.5; L.6.1, L.6.4.a, L.6.4.b, L.6.4.d (see page A31 for full text)



AT A GLANCE

Through an illustration, students use important details to help them uncover the theme in a text. They learn that important details support a text's central idea and that the central idea reflects the message about life that the author wants to share with readers.

STEP BY STEP

- Read aloud the definitions of *theme* and *central idea*. Discuss with students how the two concepts differ.
- Direct students' attention to the illustration, and ask them to tell the first thing they learn when looking at it. (*The picture is about a soccer award.*) Guide them in identifying and circling the details and words that tell the most important information about the illustration and that help them figure out the lesson about life the picture conveys.
- Explain that the chart helps to show how important details relate to the theme. Read aloud each of the important details in the first column, and ask students to compare these words to the information they circled in the illustration. Discuss with students how the important details in the first column lead to the theme in the second column, hard work pays off.
- Remind students that the first step to understanding the theme of a text is to figure out its central idea. Share with them an anecdote about a story you read where figuring out the central idea led you to understanding the theme.

Genre Focus

Literary Texts: Realistic Fiction

Tell students that in this lesson they will read realistic fiction stories. Explain that realistic fiction stories share the following characteristics:

- They have characters who take part in activities that could really happen.
- They include characters, setting, and situations that are believable and could really happen.
- Some aspects of the story are made up.

Based on these characteristics, ask students to recall examples of realistic fiction that they have read. Invite students to give a brief description of each story. Who

Lesson 8 Part 1: Introduction

Determining Theme or Central Idea

CCLS
 RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details....

A Time to Change

Did you ever read a story and learn an important lesson from the story's key events? Have you been able to learn from the situations certain characters face? Often authors present a **theme**, or main message of a text. The theme is the lesson about life that an author wants you to think about. To identify a theme, first determine the **central idea**, or what the story is mostly about. Look at the picture below and think about its message.

Look carefully at the picture and the caption. They tell about how someone becomes a most improved player. Circle the details and words that help you figure out the lesson about life the picture conveys. Then read the chart below to see how these details can help you figure out the picture's theme.

Important Details	Theme
soccer player, worst on team	Hard work pays off.
practiced hard	
became most improved player	

Determining a text's theme is like putting together pieces of a puzzle. If you can carefully assemble the important details, you can determine the central idea and understand the author's message.

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AT A GLANCE

Students identify important details in a section of text and use those details to determine the central idea.

STEP BY STEP

- Remind students that they just identified the important details of an illustration to help them uncover the theme.
- Tell students that in this lesson they will apply the same strategy to a story to help them find its theme.
- Read aloud “Tiana’s Scar.”
- Then read the question: “What is this part of the story about?”
- Tell students you will use a Think Aloud to demonstrate a way of answering the question.

Think Aloud: The author does not state the central idea of the story directly. I’ll use important details about the characters and events to help me figure out what this part of the story is about. From the title and the first paragraph, I know that Tiana was bitten by a dog when she was five years old, and she has a scar on her finger from the dog bite.

- Direct students to the chart and ask where they’ve seen a similar chart before. Review that it shows how important details from the story suggest a central idea, and point out the two important details in the first column.

Think Aloud: What else does the author want me to know about Tiana’s scar? I read in paragraph 2 that Tiana is now 11 years old, and she still avoids dogs wherever she goes.

- Have students look for important details in the story, writing a third important detail in the first column.

Think Aloud: Now that I have identified important details from the story, I can think about the central idea that they support. The details all suggest that Tiana’s dog bite is still a big deal to her many years later.

- Have students work in pairs to discuss the details about Tiana’s actions and feelings. Ask them to suggest sentences that express the central idea.
- Finally, have students complete the chart. Invite volunteers to share their answers with the class.

Part 2: Modeled Instruction
Lesson 8

Read the first three paragraphs of a story about Tiana and her fear of dogs. Then read and answer the question that follows.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Tiana’s Scar *by Maria Kane*

When she was five years old, Tiana was bitten by Rex, her uncle’s dog. The bite left a small scar on Tiana’s finger.

Now 11, Tiana still avoids dogs wherever she goes. Every morning, Tiana walks an extra block to school to avoid walking by her neighbor’s dog, Millie. Millie lies quietly behind a locked gate and doesn’t bark much, but Tiana insists on avoiding the dog at all costs.

When her best friend, Kim, laughed at Tiana’s extra hike one morning, Tiana exclaimed, “I don’t care what you think! Passing a ferocious beast is not how I want to start my day.”

“OK, calm down, Tiana,” Kim responded as Tiana rushed away angrily. (continued)

What is this part of the story about?

The author may not state the central idea of a story directly. Good readers identify key details about the main character and important events to figure out what a story is mostly about.

Look for important details in the text that show what the story is mostly about. Two of the details are given below. Write down another detail and the central idea in the space provided.

Important Details	Central Idea
Tiana was bitten by a dog at age 5.	Tiana’s fear of dogs affects her daily life.
Tiana has a scar on her finger from the dog bite.	
Tiana always avoids dogs.	

With a partner, discuss details about Tiana’s actions and feelings. Take turns explaining what these details may reveal about the central idea of this story.

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ELL Support: Regular Past Tense

- Explain to students that the past tense of a verb tells that the action has already happened. The past tense of a regular verb ends with *-ed*.
- Point out the regular past-tense verbs *exclaimed* and *responded* in “Tiana’s Scar” on page 70. Explain to students that the present-tense verbs *exclaim* and *respond* were changed to the past tense by adding *-ed*.
- Challenge students to identify two more regular past-tense verbs in “Tiana’s Scar” (*laughed*, *rushed*) and identify how they were formed (*add -ed*).
- Write on the board: *I strum a guitar*. Point out the verb *strum*. Work with students to form the past tense (*strummed*) and tell how it is formed (*by adding -med*). **(L.6.1)**



AT A GLANCE

Students continue reading about Tiana’s fear of dogs. They answer a multiple-choice question and explain which details helped them figure out the story’s theme.

STEP BY STEP

- Tell students that they will continue reading about Tiana’s fear of dogs.
- Close Reading will help students identify the important details that reveal the story’s theme. The Hint will remind students what a theme is in order to select the best theme statement for this story.
- Have students read the story and underline important details, as directed by Close Reading.
- Invite volunteers to share the sentence that shows Tiana is changing. Have students explain why the sentence shows this idea best. If necessary, ask: What does Tiana do that she has not done before?
- Have students respond to Show Your Thinking, and place students into pairs to discuss the Pair Share prompt. Guide them to use their answer to the Close Reading to help them complete these activities.

ANSWER ANALYSIS

Choice A is correct. Once Tiana learned how to behave around a dog, she was able to overcome her fear.

Choice B is incorrect. Tiana’s friend Kim did not understand Tiana’s fear of dogs, and Kim was not with Tiana when she pushed herself to overcome that fear.

Choice C is incorrect. The passage suggests that dogs are less likely to bark at confident people, but this detail is not the theme of the story.

Choice D is correct. This statement is not supported by the story. Tiana’s newfound confidence did help her solve her problem of being afraid of dogs.

ERROR ALERT: Students who did not choose A may have difficulty distinguishing details, which are stated in a text, from the central idea and theme, which are usually inferred from the details in a text. Guide students to consider each answer choice carefully to determine which choice is supported by all of the important details in the story, rather than by just some of them.

Part 3: Guided Instruction Lesson 8

Continue reading Tiana’s story. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

Close Reading
Underline important details. Find the sentence that shows Tiana is changing.

(continued from page 70)
One day, Tiana’s class took a field trip to an animal shelter. The tour guide explained different types of dogs and their behaviors. Tiana asked the guide many questions and described her fear of dogs. “You should never act scared of a dog,” the guide explained. “If you walk calmly and with confidence, dogs are less likely to bark at you.” The guide demonstrated this for Tiana and her class.

Walking home from school that day, Tiana decided to be brave and give it a try. She walked confidently past Millie. At first, the dog stood up and stared, but when it saw Tiana holding her head high, it sat down quietly. Tiana felt proud—and not scared at all.

Hint
Which choice best sums up the main message of the story?

Circle the correct answer.
What sentence below best expresses a theme of this story?
 A Knowledge can help a person overcome fears.
 B Friends stand by you even when times are tough.
 C Dogs only bark at people who act scared.
 D Confidence does not help people solve problems.

Show Your Thinking
Look at the answer you chose above. Explain which details from the story helped to convey this theme.
 Responses will vary.

Choose an incorrect answer. Explain to a partner why it is NOT a theme of the story.

L8: Determining Theme or Central Idea
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Tier 2 Vocabulary: Demonstrated

- Direct students to the word *demonstrated* in paragraph 1. Remind students that they can use clues in the surrounding text to help them figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Point out the word *this* that follows *demonstrated*. Suggest that understanding what *this* is referring to will help them understand the meaning of *demonstrated*.
- Ask volunteers to identify in the surrounding text what *this* refers to (“walk calmly and with confidence”). Then have students suggest the meaning of *demonstrated* (“showed how to do something”). (RL.6.4; L.6.4.a)

**AT A GLANCE**

Students read a story twice about a trip to Mount Rushmore. After the first reading, you will ask three questions to check students' comprehension.

STEP BY STEP

- Have students read the passage silently without referring to the Study Buddy or Close Reading text.
- Ask the following questions to ensure students' comprehension of the text:

What reason does the narrator give for thinking his vacation will be boring? (*He says that he learned about Mount Rushmore in school and that he did not find the monument interesting.*)

What part of the vacation makes the narrator begin to think that the vacation might be interesting after all? (*When the narrator and his family take a drive through a wildlife park, he begins to feel hopeful.*)

What does the narrator think was most interesting about Mount Rushmore? (*He was amazed by the size of the statue carvings.*)

- Ask students to reread paragraph 1 and look at the Study Buddy think aloud. What does the Study Buddy help them think about?

Tip: The Study Buddy reminds students to look for clues that show how the main character changes. This is a way to start looking for the message that the author wants readers to learn because authors often show how a character learns a lesson to teach a message about life to the audience.

- Have students reread the rest of the story. Tell them to follow the directions in the Close Reading.

Tip: Close Reading helps students identify important details at the beginning and end of the story. By comparing these details, students can better understand the central idea. Reinforce that identifying important details in a text helps students determine the central idea, which is an important step in uncovering the theme.

- Finally, have students answer the questions on page 73. Use the Answer Analysis to discuss correct and incorrect responses.

Read the text. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.



Maybe the author is giving clues about the theme by showing how the main character changes. I'm going to underline sentences that show the main character's feelings change.

Close Reading

Why does the narrator think the family trip will be boring? **Underline** the sentence that explains why the narrator is not looking forward to the trip.

What is the narrator's final opinion of Mount Rushmore as a place to see and visit? **Circle** words or phrases that describe the narrator's opinion at the end of the story.

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Rushmore by Mark Santiago

- 1 This summer, my parents planned a trip for us to visit Mount Rushmore. Our sixth-grade class had studied Mount Rushmore, and a visit there sounded really boring. Last summer, we went to a theme park, and I went on about fifty rides. Now I was supposed to enjoy staring at a huge carved rock?
- 2 As we drove to the airport, I prepared myself for the boredom that I would have to endure over the next week. A few hours later, we landed in Rapid City, and we spent the afternoon driving through a wildlife park, where we saw all kinds of amazing creatures. I was starting to think this trip might not be a huge waste of time after all.
- 3 Seeing the animals was fascinating, but nothing could prepare me for what we saw the next day. We drove about 30 miles to Mount Rushmore. I knew that Mount Rushmore was a mountain with the faces of the presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln carved into its side. I've seen statues of famous people before. I didn't know why these would be any different, but boy did I find out!
- 4 When I saw the monument for the first time, I felt frozen in my tracks. Mount Rushmore is simply majestic. The size of the carvings is astounding—each head is about 60 feet high! I never thought anything could top the theme park adventure I had last year, but now I know that sometimes a big rock can actually take my breath away.

Tier 2 Vocabulary: Majestic

- Point out the word *majestic* in paragraph 4. Guide students to look for context clues that help them understand the meaning of *majestic* (“*felt frozen in my tracks*,” “*astounding*,” “*take my breath away*”).
- Explain to students that they can use a dictionary to check the definition of a word. Point out that the way a word is used in a sentence can help show which dictionary definition best fits the word. Have students suggest the meaning of *majestic* (“*having astonishing beauty*”). (**RL.6.4; L.6.4.a, L.6.4.d**)



STEP BY STEP

- Have students read questions 1–3, using the Hints to help them answer those questions.

Tip: If students have trouble answering question 3, remind them to think about how the main character changes. Encourage students to ask themselves, “What lesson does the main character learn about life?” when they are trying to uncover a text’s theme.

- Discuss with students the Answer Analysis below.

ANSWER ANALYSIS

- 1 The correct choice is B. It shares an important detail about the narrator’s feelings. Choice A is a detail about the narrator’s vacation the year before, not his feelings. Choice C is a detail about the narrator’s vacation this year, not his feelings. Choice D states the fact that the narrator has seen statues before, but it does not tell his feelings about the statues.
- 2 The correct choice is A. It sums up the entire story. Choice B is incorrect. The story is about one person’s experience, not the opinion of many people. Choice C is incorrect. Visiting the wildlife park was a detail in the story, not a central idea. Choice D is incorrect. The story didn’t mention problems with planning for the trip. The problem is with the narrator’s attitude about the destination.
- 3 Sample response: “People can learn and grow by experiencing new things” is an important theme in the story, because this is what happens to the narrator. At the beginning, the narrator thought Mount Rushmore would be boring because he had studied the monument in school. But when he experienced the monument himself, he was overwhelmed with its magnificence.

RETEACHING

Use a chart to answer question 3. Draw the chart below, leaving the boxes blank. Work with students to fill in the boxes. Sample responses are provided.

Important Details	Theme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family goes to Mount Rushmore • narrator thinks it will be boring because he studied it in school • actual visit astonishes narrator 	People can learn and grow by experiencing new things.

Part 4: Guided Practice
Lesson 8

Hints

Which sentence describes how the narrator initially feels about the trip to Mount Rushmore?

Think about why the narrator’s feelings about the summer vacation have changed.

What aspects of the trip surprise the narrator? What can readers learn from the narrator’s feelings about the trip?

Look at your marked-up text. Then use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 In this story, the narrator’s feelings are clues about the story’s central idea. Which sentence from the story shares an important detail about the author’s feelings?
 - A “Last summer, we went to a theme park and I went on about fifty rides.”
 - B** “Our sixth-grade class had studied Mount Rushmore, and a visit there sounded really boring.”
 - C “This summer, my parents planned a trip for us to visit Mount Rushmore.”
 - D “I’ve seen statues of famous people before.”
- 2 What is the central idea of the story?
 - A** The narrator had a great experience on a trip that was supposed to be boring.
 - B Many people think Mount Rushmore is a great place to visit in the summer.
 - C Visiting a wildlife park can be dangerous but fun.
 - D It’s important to plan a vacation far in advance to avoid hassles.
- 3 Identify the theme of this story. Include at least one detail from the story to support the theme.
See sample response.

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Integrating Standards

Use these questions to further students’ understanding of “Rushmore.”

- 1 Summarize the story in your own words. **(RL.6.2)**
The narrator is disappointed to visit Mount Rushmore for vacation because he studied the monument in school and thought it would be boring to visit. The vacation begins well with an interesting visit to a wildlife park. The story ends with the narrator being pleasantly surprised and awestruck by the majesty of Mount Rushmore.
- 2 Identify evidence from the story that supports the idea that the narrator was surprised when he saw Mount Rushmore. **(RL.6.1)**
Sample response: The narrator says he was “frozen in his tracks” when he first saw the monument. This means the view made him stop moving and suggests that he was surprised by seeing something he didn’t expect.



Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.

Vivian's Move

by Miguel Pereira

1 On a gray, rainy morning, Vivian waved goodbye to the red door she had walked through for the last time. She waved goodbye to her bus stop, which looked lonely in the rain. She waved goodbye to her favorite bakery, the grocery store, and the neighborhood softball field, which was a swirl of cold, brown mud. She waved goodbye to the frozen Charles River, and a tear fell down her face as she watched Boston vanish in the rearview mirror of the truck they had rented to move their lives across the country.

2 Vivian had known for over six months that she was going to move to San Francisco, but she didn't want to believe it. Boston had been her home since she was born; it was all she knew, and she loved it. After all, Boston had the best Italian food, beautiful buildings, subways, and—most importantly—her friends. What would she do in a new city without her friends?

3 For the past couple of months, Vivian and her dad had been reading about San Francisco and California. He wanted her to be excited, but she didn't care that San Francisco was on a beautiful bay with scenic hills. She didn't care that the city was known for having some of the best food in the world. She didn't care about the spectacular Golden Gate Bridge and the warmer winters. Boston was beautiful and had wonderful restaurants, and she adored the fall leaves and the snowy winters.

4 Vivian and her dad took two and a half weeks to drive to San Francisco. By the time they crossed the California state line, they had driven through twelve states, four mountain ranges, three national parks, and countless cities and towns. Vivian felt exhausted from the long trip, and now she had to face the reality of why she was on the trip in the first place: California was her new home.

5 The book that said San Francisco is hilly was right. Vivian thought that "hilly" was an understatement. She felt like she was on a roller coaster as they drove through the steep hills of the city. She thought it was too bad that San Francisco didn't get snow like Boston does. These hills would be amazing for sledding! On the other hand, she thought about how much more fun the double-seated bike that she and her dad rode around Boston would be on these hills—at least going down!

6 After driving around for a while, Vivian's dad stopped the truck at the top of a hill in front of a house with a pink door. Her dad wasn't particularly excited about the bubble-gum-colored entrance, but Vivian was thrilled. The red door on their house in Boston suddenly didn't feel so far away. She ran through the door, up the stairs, and into the second room on the right, just like her dad had explained. This was her room, and it was perfect. It had blue walls, a slanted ceiling, and a circle window that looked out on the street. The movers already had set up her bed in the room. San Francisco was starting to feel more like home every minute.

7 Vivian and her dad left their new house after several hours of unpacking to find somewhere to eat dinner. They found themselves in a part of town called North Beach. Vivian smiled when she saw restaurants with names like Mama Mia and Mangia Bene, and red, white, and green flags hanging in the windows. She was delighted to smell the delicious aromas floating in the air. She recognized that this was the Italian section of town and couldn't believe how similar it was to the North End in Boston.

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8 Before going home, Vivian and her dad decided to take a trolley car to a nearby beach. They wanted to watch the sun set on their first day in San Francisco. When Vivian stepped off the trolley, she saw the waves lapping onto the beach in front of the silhouette of the Golden Gate Bridge. She wondered if it were possible for San Francisco to be as wonderful as Boston. So far, San Francisco was pretty great. She let out a sigh as she watched the sun turn colors and fade away. She thought about how her friends in Boston were probably asleep, and she wondered what new friends she would meet in San Francisco.

Answer Form

1 Ⓐ ● Ⓒ Ⓓ

2 Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ

3 ● Ⓑ Ⓒ Ⓓ

Number Correct

1 Which sentence helps convey the central idea that Vivian is changing her mind about the move?

- A "On a gray, rainy morning, Vivian waved goodbye to the red door she had walked through for the last time."
 B "San Francisco was starting to feel more like home every minute."
 C "For the past couple of months, Vivian and her dad had been reading about San Francisco and California."
 D "Boston was beautiful and had wonderful restaurants, and she adored the fall leaves and the snowy winters."

2 What is the central idea of paragraph 3?

- A Vivian's dad thinks San Francisco is better than Boston.
 B San Francisco doesn't get snow like Boston does.
 C Vivian doesn't want to leave Boston for San Francisco.
 D Only Vivian loves the fall and the winter seasons.

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AT A GLANCE

Students independently read a longer story and answer questions in a format that provides test practice.

STEP BY STEP

- Tell students to use what they have learned about reading carefully and determining theme to read the story on pages 74 and 75.
- Remind students to underline or circle important points.
- Tell students to answer the questions on pages 75 and 76. For questions 1–3, they should fill in the correct circle on the Answer Form.
- When students have finished, use the Answer Analysis to discuss correct responses and the reasons for them. Have students fill in the Number Correct on the Answer Form.

ANSWER ANALYSIS

- 1 Choice B is correct. At the beginning, Vivian did not want to believe she was moving to San Francisco because Boston was her home. This sentence indicates that she is now thinking of San Francisco as home. Choices A and D show how Vivian felt about Boston at the beginning of the story, not how she is changing her mind about San Francisco. Choice C is incorrect. Reading about San Francisco didn't help Vivian change her mind.

Theme Connection

- How do all the stories in this lesson relate to the theme, a time to change?
- Which character in this lesson's stories went through the greatest change from the beginning to the end of the story? Why?

Writing Activities

Write a Dialogue (W.6.3.b)

- Have students review “Vivian’s Move” to look for events in the story that may have included a discussion between Vivian and her father. Ask them to think about what Vivian and her father might have said to each other during these events.
- Challenge students to enhance “Vivian’s Move” with dialogue between Vivian and her father. They might choose to replace an existing paragraph with dialogue, or add dialogue to the existing story.
- Allow time for students to share their dialogue with the class.

Latin Roots (L.6.4.b)

- Point out the words *confidence* and *confidently* on page 71, and write the words on the board.
- Discuss how words are made up of word parts, including prefixes, word roots, and suffixes. Underline the root *fid* in each word, and explain that this is a Latin root that means “faith” or “trust.” Discuss how knowing the meaning of this root helps to understand the meaning of the words.
- Have students write three sentences using different words that contain the root *fid*.

LISTENING ACTIVITY (SL.6.1)

Listen Closely/Pose a Question

- Have a student read aloud “Tiana’s Scar” while the rest of the class listens closely and takes notes on important details they hear.
- After reading, ask students to write two questions based on the notes they took, such as “What is the name of the dog that bit Tiana?” (*Rex*)
- Have pairs of students pose their questions to each other and answer using evidence from the story.

DISCUSSION ACTIVITY (SL.6.4)

Talk in a Group/Discuss Abstract Concepts

- Have small groups of students discuss the concept of change.
- Ask them to begin by discussing how each main character in the lesson’s stories changes. Can students identify with any of these changes?
- Have students share their personal opinions about change, answering such questions as “How do you feel about change?” or “Do you think change is good for a person? Why or why not?”
- Have groups share their responses with the class.

MEDIA ACTIVITY (RL.6.7; SL.6.2)

Be Creative/Compare Text and Video Descriptions

- Have students perform an Internet search for video footage of Mount Rushmore.
- Have students write a comparison of the experience of Mount Rushmore as described in “Rushmore” and as presented in the videos.
- Allow time for students to share their work.

RESEARCH AND SPEAKING ACTIVITY (W.6.7; SL.6.4; SL.6.5)

Research and Present/Give a Presentation

- Have students use “Vivian’s Move” to plan a virtual tour of either Boston or San Francisco, focusing on the places mentioned in the story.
- Tell them to not only identify specific places, such as the Golden Gate Bridge, but also more general places, such as Boston’s “beautiful buildings.”
- Have students research descriptions and pictures of the places they identify, and put together a virtual tour of the city. They should write brief descriptions of each picture they choose, organize the information logically, and present it to the class as a tour guide might.