Theme and character response

Connect a Choice to Its Cost

Name _____ Date _____

Quick review A theme is a message, not just a topic word. Connect the character's challenge, response and outcome to a message the story supports.

Example Jo's model collapsed. She asked for advice, revised it and built a model that stayed upright. This supports a theme: learning from setbacks can help us improve.

Read the puzzle story. Explain the character's conflict, evaluate a proposed message, and write a brief theme response. Other evidence-based messages may be valid.

The Answer on the Reverse

[1] Dax wanted to finish first in the class puzzle challenge. He had cleared a space for the paper badge awarded to the fastest solver. When he turned his puzzle sheet to smooth a crease, he found a faint printed answer on the reverse. He turned the sheet faceup before anyone looked over.

[2] The first answer would save him several minutes. Dax rested his pencil on the desk, then carried the page to Ms. Ives. 'This copy has an answer on it,' he said. She thanked him and found a different puzzle. By the time he returned to his seat, two classmates were almost finished.

[3] Dax did not win the badge. He solved the new puzzle slowly, checking each clue. When a classmate asked how he had worked out the hardest part, he showed his notes without covering anything. The empty space on his desk remained, but he kept the completed puzzle in his folder.

1. Identify Dax's conflict and the choice he makes. Include why the choice has a cost.

2. Explain why 'Honesty always brings a prize' is not a supported theme. Cite the outcome.

3. Write a theme as a complete message, not the topic 'honesty' or the event 'Dax solves a puzzle.'

4. Write two sentences connecting your theme to Dax's decision and an ending detail.

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Responses and feedback: Connect a Choice to Its Cost

These are sample responses and reasoning. Accept other answers that fit the task and are supported by the text or language rule.

1. Dax can use an accidentally printed answer to gain time or report it and solve a new puzzle. He reports it, losing time while classmates approach the finish.

Reasoning: First connect the visible answer to his goal of finishing first. Then explain how choosing a replacement puzzle gives up an advantage and makes the honest choice meaningful.

2. Dax does not win the badge after reporting the answer. The story therefore does not support a promise that honest choices always bring prizes.

Reasoning: First compare the proposed guarantee with the explicit sentence that he did not win. Then distinguish choosing honesty from receiving an external reward.

3. Doing work honestly can matter more than gaining an unfair advantage or finishing first.

Reasoning: First state a broader message about choices. Then keep it tied to the answer he reports and the badge he loses, rather than adding a reward the story never gives him.

4. Dax gives up an unfair advantage when he reports the printed answer and accepts a new puzzle. Although he loses the badge, he openly explains his own reasoning and keeps the completed work, supporting a message about valuing honest effort over winning.

Reasoning: First use the decision to show what Dax gives up. Then connect his open explanation and saved work to what remains worthwhile without claiming that the narrator directly states his feelings.