

Story 1-1 Akiak

Think About the Selection

1. How do you think Mick feels when she sends Akiak home on day four? Would you have made the same decision?
2. What qualities make Akiak such a good lead dog? Do you think her age is an advantage or a disadvantage? Give reasons for your answer.
3. The author tells the story in an unusual way: by breaking it down into days. Why do you think he chose to do that?
4. One man helps Akiak by opening a door for her. Why do you think he did that?
5. Did Akiak really win the race? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Connecting/Comparing - Why is this particular journey so important to Akiak and Mitch?

Story 1-2 Grandfather's Journey

Think About the Selection

1. Why was Allen Say's grandfather so impressed by what he saw on his first trip to North America?
2. If you were seeing North America for the first time, what do you think would impress you the most? Why?
3. Why do you think Grandfather kept songbirds in North America and in Japan? Why did he stop after the war?
4. How are the journeys that Allen Say and his grandfather take similar? How are they different?
5. Why do you think Allen Say wanted to tell the story of his grandfather's journey?
6. Connecting/Comparing How do the settings in *Grandfather's Journey* and *Akiak* play an important part in each journey? Be sure to give examples.

Story 1-3 Finding the Titanic

Think About the Selection

1. Why do you think Robert Ballard was so determined to find the *Titanic*?
2. What conditions made the *Titanic* especially hard to find?
3. In this selection, Ballard tells two stories that take place at different times. How does he keep the two stories separate?
4. How would you feel if you were on the *Titanic* like Ruth, or if you were with Ballard's crew? Explain.
5. Why do you think people are still fascinated today by the *Titanic* ?
6. **Connect/Comparing** Both Ruth Becker and Grandfather in *Grandfather's Journey* took trips that changed their lives. Compare how they felt as they looked back on their journeys.

Story 1-4 By the Shores of Silver Lake

Think About the Selection

1. What makes this train ride special for Laura and her family?
2. How can you tell that Ma is nervous about the family's trip?
3. How do you think Laura and Mary feel about each other? What clues does the story give?
4. Laura "sees out loud" for Mary, but Mary also notices things on her own. Give examples of how Mary observes her surroundings.
5. If you were traveling during Laura's time, would you rather go by horse and wagon, or by train?
6. **Connect/Comparing** Laura is excited and nervous before her train trip. Compare her feelings with the way another character in this theme feels at the beginning of a journey.

Story 2-1 Tomás and the Library Lady

Think About the Selection

1. How do you think Tomás feels when he first sees the library?
Give examples from the story to support your opinion.
2. Before Tomás meets the library lady, his grandfather is the family storyteller. Why does this change after Tomás starts visiting the library?
3. How would you describe the library lady? What kind of person is she?
4. What do you think Tomás enjoys most about reading books? Tell about your favorite book and what you enjoy most about it.
5. Tomás and the library lady become friends. What do you think they learn from each other?
6. Connect/Comparing Tomás Rivera grew up to be a successful educator and writer. Why do you think the author of this book chose to write about this time in Tomás Rivera's life?

2-2 Tanya's Reunion

Think About the Selection

1. Describe the relationship between Tanya and her grandmother. How do you think they feel about each other?
2. How does Tanya's opinion of the farm change during the time she spends there?
3. Aunt Kay gathers special family items to display at the reunion. What might these objects add to the reunion?
4. If your family had a reunion like Tanya's, what object would you want to share? What would you say about it?
5. Why is Tanya excited to find the piece of fence with her grandmother's initials? Why is her grandmother excited too?
6. Both Tanya and Tomás from *Tomás and the Library Lady* visit new places. What do they learn from their experiences in those places?
Tanya's grandmother talks about what it was like when she was growing up. Interview an adult about what it was like when he or she was your age. It's a good idea to write down your questions before you do the interview.

2-3 Boss of the Plains
Think About the Selection
(coming soon)

2-4 A Very Important Day
Think About the Selection

1. Why do the people in the story react differently to snow?
2. Why do you think the author writes about so many different families, instead of concentrating on one family?
3. How do you know that becoming American citizens means a lot to these families?
4. Why was Bailog's gift to Yujin (p. 266) a good choice on this particular day?
5. The author waits until the end of the story to show the importance of this day. Why do you think she does this?
6. Connecting/Comparing: Tanya's family reunion is an important day for her. If she and Yujin could discuss their important days, what do you think they would say?

3-1 The Stranger

Think About the Selection

1. What is the Bailey family like? Use details from the story to support your description.
2. What are the first few clues that tell you that something is unusual about the stranger?
3. The stranger feels that something is "terribly wrong" when he sees green leaves on the trees. What do you think is wrong?
4. Who do you think the stranger is? List three clues that help you guess his identity.
5. If the stranger stayed for a while in the area where you live, what effect do you think he would have on the climate?
6. What does Chris Van Allsburg do to make this story mysterious and amazing? Look at both the words and illustrations.

3-2 Cendrillon

Think About the Selection

1. How do you think Madame and Vitaline felt when they found out that Cendrillon was the mysterious guest at the ball.
2. Which events in the story could happen in real life? Which amazing events could never happen in real life?
3. Why does Cendrillon want to wear her own clothes when Paul puts the slipper on her foot?
4. How would this story have been different if Cendrillon had left the ball on time?
5. Many countries have versions of the Cinderella story. Why do you think this story is so popular all over the world?

3-3 Heat Wave!

Think About the Selection

1. What qualities make the girl so good at fighting the heat wave?
2. How is the heat wave like a character in the story? If the heat wave could speak, what would it say?
3. Many scenes in this selection exaggerate an ordinary event until it becomes amazing? Give three examples.
4. If the farm had been out of lettuce seeds, how else could the girl have defeated the heat wave?
5. Before the heat wave, the girl's brother teased her that girls couldn't be farmers. What do you think he says about her now?
6. What do you think would happen if the stranger from Chris Van Allsburg's story were at the farm during the heat wave attack?

4-1 My Name is Maria Isabel

Think About the Selection

1. Why is the book *Charlotte's Web* so important to Maria Isabel?
2. Why do you think Maria Isabel feels that she is "caught in a sticky, troublesome spider's web of her own?"
3. Maria Isabel doesn't tell her parents that she is upset. Why do you think she keeps her feelings to herself?
4. How does writing the essay help Maria Isabel solve her problem?
5. If you had a difficult problem to solve, would you solve it the way Maria Isabel did, or would you choose a different way? Explain.
6. What does this selection teach you about solving problems?

4-2 Marven of the Great Northwest

Think About the Selection

1. What does Marven think of Jean Louis at first? How and why does his opinion change?
2. Why is Marven so good at adjusting his life in the logging camp? Give examples of how he solves some problems there.
3. How do you think Marven's experience in the great north woods might have changed him?
4. What do you think Marven will miss about the logging camp when he returns home?
5. If you had to spend the winter at a logging camp, what would you be worried about? What would you look forward to?
6. Both Maria Isabel and Marven had problems getting used to a new place. Compare their experiences.

4-3 The Last Dragon

Think About the Selection

1. What does Peter mean when he says, "There's something about this dragon"?
2. Give examples from the story of how Great Aunt helps Peter with his dragon.
3. Why are Great Aunt's neighbors willing to help Peter?
4. How does Peter change because of his experience fixing the dragon?
5. Would this story be different if one person had repaired Peter's entire dragon? Explain.
6. Compare Peter's experiences away from home with the experiences another character in this theme.

4-4 Sing to the Stars

Think About the Selection

1. Why do you think Ephram likes to practice on the roof?
2. What does Mr. Washington mean when he tells Ephram, "Music speaks best when someone listens"?
3. Why does Ephram want Mr. Washington to perform with him at the concert?
4. Why do you think Mr. Washington finally decides to play the piano with Ephram?
5. Ephram says that music speaks for him when he can't talk about his feelings. How do *you* feel when you listen to music?
6. Explain how music helps Ephram and Maria Isabel solve their problems.

5-1 Happy Birthday, Dr. King!

Think About the Selection

1. Why is Jamal's grandfather so unhappy that Jamal fought to sit at the back of the bus?
2. What does Jamal learn from talking with this grandfather? How is he different after the talk?
3. How does Jamal use what he learns from his grandfather in his skit?
4. Jamal says that he did something "really stupid that turned out to be stupendous instead." what do you think he means?
5. What would you like to do for a school celebration of Dr. King's birthday?
6. Who do you think are the heroes in this story? What makes them heroic?

5-2 Gloria Estefan

Think About the Selection

1. Why do you think Gloria Estefan enjoyed music so much while she was growing up?
2. Do you think Gloria and Emilio Estefan make a good musical team? Explain.
3. Why was it such a great achievement for Gloria Estefan's song "Conga" to appear on four different music charts at the same time?
4. What do you learn about Gloria Estefan's personality from the way she recovered from her accident?
5. Would you enjoy having the kind of fame that Gloria Estefan has achieved? Why or why not?
6. What qualities and accomplishments make Gloria Estefan a hero?

5-3 Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man

Think About the Selection

1. What made Lou Gehrig a great ballplayer? Give facts about both his achievements and his character.
2. How did Gehrig's childhood habits help him when he joined the Yankees?
3. What does Gehrig's life teach you about good sportsmanship?
4. How do you think the fans felt when they heard Gehrig's speak at Yankee Stadium? Would you have felt the same?
5. Why did Lou Gehrig call himself the "luckiest man on the face of the earth"? Do you agree?
6. Lou Gehrig and Gloria Estefan are not only stars but good citizens. Explain.

6-1 Salmon Summer

Think About the Selection

1. How are salmon important to life on Kodiak Island?
2. Why do you think the author begins the selection by telling about tamuug?
3. Give examples of how Alex keeps the traditions of his ancestors.
4. Why do you think Alex likes fishing with a line more than fishing with a net?
5. If you could spend the summer on Kodiak Island, which activities would you like the best? Which ones would you like the least?
6. How do Alex and his family show respect for nature? Give examples.

6-2 Wildfires

Think About the Selection

1. What makes a wildfire "a frightening thing"?
2. How do some plants, trees, and animals depend on wildfires?
3. Why do some people think it is a good idea to let certain wildfires burn?
4. What do you think "using fires wisely" means?
5. What is Seymour Simon's opinion of wildfires?
6. In *Salmon Summer*, nature was a source of food, work, and enjoyment for people. How would you describe nature in *Wildfire*?

6-3 Skylark

Think About the Selection

1. Why is Sarah so upset about the coyote at the beginning of the selection?
2. Who do you think removes the glass from the fence post and why? Why does Sarah want to put it back?
3. How does Anna feel about Sarah? How does she show her feelings?
4. The day after the barn burns down, the narrator says that "everything has changed." What does she mean by that?
5. Why is it so hard for the family to decide whether to stay or leave the farm? Why does Papa stay behind?
6. How is nature portrayed differently in *Skylark* than in the other two selections in this theme?