Compare Stories in the Same Genre

Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

Two Historical Stories About a New Home

Story 1: The Seed Tin, 1907

I was eleven when Mama and I sailed from Norway to New York. In my coat pocket, I carried a small tin from my grandmother. Inside were seeds from her garden: yellow poppies that grew on our hillside at home.

Our new apartment was on the fourth floor of a crowded brick building. There was no hillside, no garden and hardly any sky. The street below rang with languages I did not understand. At school, I sat silently while the other children laughed at jokes I could not follow.

One spring morning, I found an old wooden crate in the alley. Mama helped me fill it with soil, and we set it on the iron fire escape outside our window. I planted Grandmother's seeds in a careful row.

Weeks passed. Then, one June morning, yellow poppies opened in the sunlight. Mrs. Russo from the floor below leaned out her window. "Bellissimi, Ilse!" she called, pointing at the flowers. The next day she gave me a pot of basil from her own window box.

Soon other neighbors were growing plants too. Mr. Kaplan grew tomatoes. The Ortiz twins planted marigolds. Our gray building bloomed with color, one fire escape at a time.

I still missed Norway. But when I looked at the poppies, I understood something. I had not left home behind. I had carried a piece of it with me and planted it here.

Story 2: Two Kinds of Letters, 1876

Wei was ten when he crossed the Pacific Ocean to join his father in San Francisco. Father ran a small laundry on a steep, busy street. Wei helped fold shirts after school, but school itself was hard. The teacher spoke only English, and the letters on the chalkboard looked like scattered sticks.

Each night, Father practiced Chinese characters with him by lamplight. "Do not forget where you come from," Father said.

At school, a boy named Henry sat next to Wei. Henry struggled with arithmetic, while Wei solved the problems quickly. One day, Henry pointed to a word in his reader and said, "Cat." Then he pointed at Wei's notebook, as if asking a question.

Wei smiled and drew the Chinese character for cat. Henry copied it slowly. Then he taught Wei the English word. Day after day, they traded words. Wei learned "river," "bread" and "friend." Henry learned to write his own name in Chinese.

That winter, Wei read a whole English page aloud for the first time. Henry beamed as if he had done it himself.

At home, Wei told Father about Henry. Father was quiet for a moment. Then he said, "A person can hold two kinds of letters in one hand." Wei understood. Learning English did not mean losing Chinese. He could keep both.

1. What topic do both stories share?
   - children settling into life in a new country
   - children going back to their first home
   - children learning to grow vegetables
   - children running a family business

2. How is the way the stories are told different?
   An outside narrator tells Story 1, but Wei tells Story 2 himself.
   Both stories are told by the main character using I.
   Ilse tells Story 1 herself, but an outside narrator tells Story 2.
   Both stories are told by one of the parents.

3. Which theme do both stories share?
   Learning a new language means forgetting the old one.
   Families should always return to their first home.
   You can belong in a new place without giving up where you came from.
   Moving to a new country is too hard for children.

4. How do the two children connect with others in different ways?
   Ilse connects by trading words; Wei connects through something he grows.
   Ilse connects through something she grows; Wei connects by trading words.
   Both connect only with adults, never with children.
   Both connect by joining a team at school.

5. What does the spread of plants across the building suggest?
   The building's owner told everyone to plant flowers.
   The neighbors wanted to grow more than Ilse did.
   Plants grew better in New York than in Norway.
   Ilse's small act helped bring her neighbors together.

6. What does Father mean by "A person can hold two kinds of letters in one hand"?
   Wei must choose between English and Chinese.
   Wei can keep Chinese and learn English too.
   Wei should write letters to relatives in China.
   Wei should fold more shirts at the laundry.

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Answer Key - Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

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