Determine the Theme

Grade 5 Reading Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

First Notes

The day my violin came home,
I lifted it from its case like something made of glass.
Its wood was the color of dark honey.
I tucked it under my chin the way my teacher showed me.
I drew the bow across the strings.
It screeched like a rusty gate.

My sister covered her ears.
The cat left the room.
I put the violin back in its case
and told myself I would never be a musician.

My teacher, Mrs. Adeyemi, only smiled.
"Every musician starts with ugly notes," she said.
"The beautiful ones are hiding behind them.
You just have to play enough to find them."

So I practiced every afternoon at four o'clock.
Fifteen minutes, then twenty, then thirty.
I played the same three notes until my fingers ached.
Some days the notes still squeaked.
Some days I wanted to hide the case under my bed.

Mrs. Adeyemi never told me I was good yet.
She only said, "Again."
So I played it again.
And again.
And again.

But slowly, something changed.
The screech softened into a scratch.
The scratch smoothed into a hum.
One rainy evening, I played a whole song,
and the cat curled up on my bed to listen.

At the spring concert, I sat in the back row
with the other new players.
My hands shook as the lights came up.
I missed one note in the middle of the song.
I wanted to stop.
Instead, I remembered all those afternoons at four o'clock,
and I kept playing.

When the song ended, the room filled with clapping.
I looked out and saw my sister,
the one who had covered her ears.
She was clapping the loudest of all.

Now, when I hear a new player screech and squeak,
I do not cover my ears.
I hear the beautiful notes hiding behind the ugly ones,
waiting for enough afternoons to find them.

I think about everything I have learned to do,
like riding a bike, reading chapter books and swimming a whole lap.
Each one began with something ugly or clumsy.
Each one grew better, one afternoon at a time.
The violin just taught me to notice.

1. Which theme best fits this poem?
   - Real talent shows itself on the very first try.
   - Concerts are more fun when people clap loudly.
   - Violins are the hardest instruments to learn.
   - Skills that start out clumsy grow strong with steady practice.

2. How did the speaker feel after playing for the first time?
   - proud, because the first notes sounded lovely
   - discouraged, sure they could never be a musician
   - annoyed, because the cat would not leave the room
   - excited, because the concert was the next day

3. What does Mrs. Adeyemi mean by "The beautiful ones are hiding behind them"?
   - Some notes are too quiet for anyone to hear.
   - The best songs are kept secret from new players.
   - Beautiful music is only played behind a curtain.
   - Good notes will come after many rough ones.

4. Which line best shows the speaker responding to the challenge?
   - So I practiced every afternoon at four o'clock.
   - My sister covered her ears.
   - I sat in the back row with the other new players.
   - It screeched like a rusty gate.

5. What does the change from "screech" to "scratch" to "hum" show?
   - The cat was learning to like loud sounds.
   - The speaker's playing slowly improved.
   - The speaker moved to a different room.
   - The violin was getting older and quieter.

6. What did the speaker do after missing a note at the concert?
   - asked Mrs. Adeyemi to finish the song
   - stopped and started the song again
   - left the stage before the song ended
   - kept playing by remembering all the practice

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Answer Key - Grade 5 Reading Worksheet

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