Determine the Theme

Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

The Clockmaker's Apprentice

In the old city of Prague, a great clock hung on the tower above the market square. Every hour, its bells rang, and crowds stopped to watch its little painted figures turn. For forty years, Master Havel had cared for the clock. Each Monday, he climbed the narrow stairs to oil its gears and check its time.

That spring, Havel took on an apprentice named Lucie. She was eleven, quick with her hands and quiet. She swept the workshop, sorted brass screws by size and watched everything the master did. At night, she copied his drawings of gears into a notebook of her own.

One Monday in May, Havel let Lucie climb the tower with him for the first time. While he oiled the large wheels, she studied the smaller ones. Something caught her eye. On one small gear, a single tooth was bent. Each time it turned, the bent tooth slipped a little. Lucie counted carefully. She guessed the clock was losing almost a minute each week.

Lucie opened her mouth, then closed it. Master Havel had cared for this clock since before her parents were born. Who was she to tell him something was wrong? Perhaps she had counted badly. Perhaps he already knew.

For three weeks, Lucie said nothing. Yet each Monday she checked the gear, and each Monday the clock was a little later. Merchants in the square began to grumble. The baker complained that the morning bells rang after his first customers had come and gone.

On the fourth Monday, Lucie could not stay quiet. "Master Havel," she said, her voice shaking, "I think the third small gear has a bent tooth. I think it is why the clock runs slow."

Havel frowned and leaned close to the gear. For a long moment, he said nothing. Lucie's cheeks grew hot. Then he straightened up and laughed softly.

"Forty years," he said, "and I never looked closely at that little wheel. I was so sure of my own eyes that I stopped using them." He turned to her. "How long have you known?"

"Three weeks," Lucie admitted. "I was afraid you would think I was rude."

Havel shook his head. "A clockmaker who cannot be corrected keeps the wrong time," he said. "I would rather hear the truth from an apprentice than have the whole city hear it from the clock."

Together they removed the gear. Havel showed Lucie how to straighten the tooth with a tiny file. When the clock was running again, he handed her the small brass key that wound it.

"Next Monday, you wind it," he said. "And if you see anything else, tell me that same day."

That evening, Lucie wrote two words at the top of a new page in her notebook. They were not the name of a gear. They were "Speak sooner."

1. Which theme best fits this story?

   Speaking up takes courage, and listening humbly helps everyone.
   Old clocks need new parts every few years.
   Experts are always right, so beginners should stay quiet.
   Hard work is the only way to master a craft.

2. Why does Lucie stay silent at first?
   She wants to fix the gear herself and take the credit.
   She has been told never to speak in the tower.
   She doubts herself and fears seeming rude.
   She thinks the slow clock does not bother anyone.

3. What finally pushes Lucie to speak?
   The clock keeps slipping and people complain.
   The baker asks her to fix the clock for him.
   Master Havel asks her if anything is wrong.
   She finds a mistake in her own drawings.

4. How does Havel's response compare with what Lucie feared?
   She expected him to laugh, but he grew angry.
   She expected him to fix it alone, and he did.
   She expected him to be offended, but he was grateful.
   She expected praise, but he scolded her for waiting.

5. What does Havel mean: "I was so sure of my own eyes that I stopped using them"?
   His confidence made him stop checking carefully.
   He trusted Lucie's eyes more than his own from the start.
   His eyesight had become too weak to see gears.
   The clock was too high to see clearly.

6. "Merchants in the square began to grumble." What does grumble mean?
   complain in a low, unhappy way
   cheer loudly together
   pack up and leave
   laugh quietly to themselves

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Answer Key - Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

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