Story Structure

Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

Notes in the Atlas

Part 1: Mei-Lin

Every afternoon, Mei-Lin did her homework at the Hillcrest Library, at the corner table under the big window. Her mother worked until six, and the library was warm and quiet.

On Tuesday, she pulled the giant world atlas off the shelf for her geography project. Tucked inside, at the map of Peru, was an index card. In neat capital letters, it said: I AM THE LONGEST MOUNTAIN RANGE ON LAND. WHAT AM I?

Mei-Lin smiled. The answer was right there on the map. She wrote ANDES on the back. Then she added her own riddle: I AM A RIVER THAT FLOWS NORTH THROUGH A DESERT. WHAT AM I? She slipped the card back into the atlas.

Part 2: Mr. Ostrowski

Every night at eight, after the library closed, Tomasz Ostrowski unlocked the side door and began cleaning. He emptied the bins, mopped the floors and put away books left on tables.

He had tucked the riddle card into the atlas a month ago, mostly for fun. He used to teach geography in Poland, and he missed asking questions. No one had answered. He had nearly forgotten about it.

On Tuesday night, he found the card on Peru again. ANDES, it said, in pencil. Below it was a new riddle. He laughed out loud in the empty room. The Nile, of course. He wrote his answer and a harder riddle, and he put the atlas back exactly where it belonged.

Part 3: Mei-Lin

For three weeks, the riddles went back and forth. Mei-Lin learned about a lake so salty that swimmers float, and a desert where it almost never rains. She checked the atlas the moment she arrived each day.

She had decided the riddle writer must be a librarian. But when she asked Ms. Okafor at the front desk, the librarian looked puzzled. "Riddles? Not me," she said. "Nobody works here after closing except the custodian."

Mei-Lin looked at the neat capital letters again. Then she wrote a different kind of note: THANK YOU FOR THE RIDDLES. WHO ARE YOU?

Part 4: Mr. Ostrowski

That night, Tomasz read the note twice. He had not expected the question. For a moment, he thought about writing nothing. Who would want to meet the man with the mop?

Then he remembered his old students' faces when they finally found an answer on a map. He took out a fresh card. I AM THE NIGHT CUSTODIAN, he wrote. I USED TO TEACH GEOGRAPHY. I WILL COME IN EARLY ON FRIDAY, AT FIVE-THIRTY.

Part 5: Friday

On Friday, Mei-Lin waited at the corner table with the atlas open to Peru. At five-thirty, a man in a gray work shirt came through the side door.

"You must be the one who knew the Nile," he said.

"And you must be the one who knows everything else," Mei-Lin answered.

They both laughed. Then, with Ms. Okafor's help, they started a new project: a riddle box beside the atlas, open to anyone. By winter, it was the busiest shelf in the library.

1. How is this story organized?
   - The parts move backward in time from Friday to Tuesday.
   - Parts switch between the two characters, then bring them together.
   - Every part is told by Ms. Okafor at the front desk.
   - Each part is one riddle followed by its answer.

2. What does Part 2 reveal that Mei-Lin does not know in Part 1?
   - who wrote the riddle and why he left it
   - where the atlas belongs on the shelf
   - what the answer to the first riddle is
   - why Mei-Lin studies at the library

3. Tuesday appears in both Part 1 and Part 2. What does the second telling add?
   - how the riddle writer felt when someone finally answered
   - the reason the library closes at eight
   - what Mei-Lin's geography project was about
   - a different answer to the mountain riddle

4. In Part 3, readers already know who writes the riddles, but Mei-Lin does not. What effect does this create?
   - Readers wait to see when she will figure it out.
   - Readers learn the answer at the same moment she does.
   - Readers no longer care about the riddles at all.
   - Readers are surprised when the custodian is named.

5. Which part contains the turning point, when the riddle game becomes something more?
   - Part 1, when Mei-Lin answers the first riddle
   - Part 3, when Mei-Lin asks who the writer is
   - Part 5, when the riddle box is started
   - Part 2, when he writes a harder riddle

6. In Part 4, why does the author include Mr. Ostrowski's memory of his old students?
   - It explains how he knew the answer about the Nile.
   - It explains why he moved away from Poland.
   - It explains why he decides to answer instead of staying hidden.
   - It explains why he cleans the library at night.

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Answer Key - Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

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