Name _____ Date _____

# Theme and Its Development: The Inheritance

**Directions:** Read the story carefully, paying close attention to its small details. Then answer each question, checking every choice against the exact words of the story.

## The Inheritance

Three weeks after the funeral, Ruth arrived at their father's house with a roll of green stickers and a legal pad, and by the time Danny got there, she had divided the first page into three columns: one for her, one for him, and one labeled *Donate*.

"We take turns," she said. "You pick, I pick. Nobody argues."

Danny surveyed the living room, where nearly every object had been broken at least once and patiently repaired: the rocking chair had a replacement runner, paler than the rest, and the lamp wore a cord spliced with electrical tape. Even the mantel clock, the only thing in the house worth real money, ran four minutes slow. Their father had repaired nearly everything he owned, but never that, and Danny had always assumed he had simply never gotten around to it.

"You can go first," Danny said, and Ruth put a sticker on the clock.

He had expected that, because Ruth was the one who researched prices, and she had researched the clock. Still, he heard himself say, "Dad wound that every Sunday, and I sat with him while he did it."

"I sat with him too. I just didn't need it to be a ceremony." Ruth wrote *clock* in her column. "Your turn."

For an hour they moved methodically through the house that way. She claimed the good dishes and the brass bookends, while he chose the radio and the ugly painting of ducks, because no one else would. Each choice felt like a small vote on who had loved their father better, and neither of them said so.

In the garage, behind a can of nails, Danny discovered a spiral notebook with a cracked cover, its pages crowded with their father's square, careful handwriting.

*Rocking chair, left runner: Ruthie stood on it to reach the cookie jar, age 6.*

*Lamp, cord and shade: Danny and Ruthie, sword fight with curtain rods, ages 8 and 11.*

*Mantel clock: Danny took it apart to find where the ticking came from and put it back together himself, age 9. Has run four minutes slow ever since. Keeping it that way.*

Danny read the clock entry twice before he carried the notebook inside and set it on the coffee table without a word.

Ruth turned the pages slowly, and the record continued for years, through a cracked windshield, a door off its hinges and a bike chain, and every repair had a name and an age beside it.

Finally she said, "He kept score."

"No," Danny said, "he kept track."

Ruth studied the green sticker on the mantel clock. Then she stood, crossed the room, peeled the sticker off, and did not put it anywhere else.

"We could keep this together," she said, holding up the notebook.

"You can go first," Danny said.

"No." She almost smiled. "Nobody picks."

**1.** Which choice best summarizes "The Inheritance" objectively, covering its most important events in order without adding any opinions about the characters?

A. Ruth and Danny divide their father's dishes, radio, bookends and an ugly painting of ducks.

B. Ruth greedily grabs the most valuable things in the house until Danny's discovery of a notebook makes her ashamed of her selfishness.

C. Ruth and Danny argue loudly over the valuable clock until Danny agrees to trade it to her in exchange for their father's notebook.

D. Weeks after their father's funeral, Ruth and Danny take turns claiming his belongings. After Danny discovers a notebook in which their father recorded his repairs, Ruth removes her sticker from the clock and suggests they keep the notebook together.

**2.** In the opening paragraphs, Ruth arrives with stickers and a legal pad, draws three columns before her brother even gets there, and announces the rule "Nobody argues." What do these details suggest about how she hopes the day will go?

A. She intends to donate everything their father owned.

B. She hopes a clear system will keep the dividing orderly and free of open conflict.

C. She expects a relaxed afternoon of sharing memories about their father.

D. She expects Danny to make every decision about their father's belongings.

**3.** When Danny mentions sitting with their father while he wound the clock every Sunday, Ruth answers that she sat with him too and "just didn't need it to be a ceremony." What is Ruth doing with this reply?

A. She is reminding Danny how much money the clock is worth.

B. She is admitting that she never spent time with their father.

C. She is refusing to let Danny's memory give him a stronger claim to the clock.

D. She is agreeing that Danny deserves to keep the clock.

**4.** Describing the hour the siblings spend moving through the house, the narrator says, "Each choice felt like a small vote on who had loved their father better, and neither of them said so." What does this sentence reveal about the turn-taking?

A. The siblings choose hurriedly because they are eager to leave the house.

B. Beneath the calm system, each sibling is quietly competing to prove the deeper love.

C. The siblings hold an actual vote to decide who keeps each object.

D. The siblings openly argue about which of them loved their father more.

**5.** Early in the passage, Danny assumes that their father, who repaired nearly everything he owned, "had simply never gotten around to" fixing the slow clock. How does the notebook's entry about the clock change the meaning of that earlier detail?

A. It reveals that their father never learned how to repair a clock.

B. It reveals that Ruth was responsible for making the clock run slow.

C. It reveals that the clock has run slow since Danny rebuilt it as a boy, and that their father deliberately kept it that way.

D. It reveals that the clock is worth much less than Ruth believed.

**6.** After paging through the notebook, Ruth remarks that their father "kept score" and Danny answers that he "kept track." What does Danny's correction suggest about the way he understands the notebook?

A. He agrees that their father was counting which child broke more things.

B. He suspects that Ruth has misread the ages written in it.

C. He believes their father wrote it to decide who would inherit each object.

D. He regards it as a record of their father's attention, not a tally of their mistakes.

**7.** The story moves from Ruth's early rule "Nobody argues" to her final words, "Nobody picks." What is the effect of ending the story on this echo of its opening?

A. It shows that the siblings are beginning to argue again.

B. It shows that Ruth intends to give the notebook away.

C. It shows that the turn-taking system worked exactly as Ruth had planned.

D. It shows how far Ruth has moved, from organizing a careful division to refusing to divide the notebook at all.

**8.** Which statement best expresses a theme of "The Inheritance" as the story develops it from the opening rules to the final line?

A. What a parent leaves behind is worth most for the care and shared history it holds, not for its price.

B. Old, repaired objects lose their value once the person who fixed them is gone.

C. The child who spent the most time with a parent deserves that parent's most meaningful possessions.

D. Dividing belongings by careful rules is the best way for a family to avoid conflict.

**9.** Which two details develop the theme that a parent's belongings are worth most for the care and shared history they hold, rather than for their price? Select two.

☐ A. The bookends Ruth takes are made of brass.

☐ B. The notebook lists a name and an age beside every repair.

☐ C. The notebook was in the garage, behind a can of nails.

☐ D. Ruth peels her sticker off the clock and does not put it anywhere else.

☐ E. The painting Danny takes is a picture of ducks.

**10.** Why is the notebook, rather than the valuable clock, such a fitting object for the siblings to keep together instead of dividing?

A. It is small enough to carry easily from one house to another.

B. It records both of their childhoods and their father's attention, so it belongs to neither of them alone.

C. It is the only object that neither of them particularly wants.

D. It is worth more money than anything else in the house.