

Threads & Themes Grade 6, Unit 2, Middle-of-Unit Summative Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PASSAGE 1

Passed Down by Hand: Apprenticeship and the Transmission of Knowledge — Lexile: 980L | Informational

(1) For thousands of years, people have learned crafts not from books, but by working beside someone who already knew them. This tradition is called apprenticeship. A student in an apprenticeship works directly with a skilled practitioner. The student learns by watching, then trying, then trying again. Craft communities around the world have used this model: joinery workshops in Japan, weaving communities in the Andes and pottery kilns in medieval Korea. In each of these places, the apprenticeship relationship has been central to the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation.

(2) The craft of joinery—the technique of joining pieces of wood together without nails or metal fasteners—offers one of the most detailed examples of apprenticeship in the world. In traditional Japanese joinery, young apprentices spend years learning to shape wood by hand. They begin with the simplest tasks. They sweep the workshop floor. They sharpen tools. These duties may seem small. But master craftspeople argue that caring for a workshop is the first step in understanding the craft. An apprentice who cares for a chisel learns the properties of its blade; one who sweeps shavings learns to recognize the grain of different woods.

(3) What distinguishes apprenticeship from classroom instruction is the nature of the interaction between teacher and student. In formal schooling, knowledge is typically organized into discrete lessons and transferred through explicit explanation. In an apprenticeship, it works the other way. A master weaver in the Andean highlands does not describe the pattern she is creating—she creates it, and the apprentice watches, then attempts, then watches again. The knowledge that results from this process is not reducible to a written formula; it must be lived.

(4) Critics of traditional apprenticeship have argued that this approach can be inefficient, even exclusionary. If a craft’s knowledge lives only in the hands of its masters, what happens when those masters are gone? In communities where apprenticeships are passed down within families or closed guilds, the craft may become inaccessible to talented outsiders. Some historians argue that the very closeness that makes apprenticeship effective also makes it fragile.

(5) Yet many practitioners defend the model, arguing that some knowledge cannot be taught any other way. Consider what a master knows that is hard to put into words: the right pressure to apply, the feel of clay at the right moment, the exact point when a glaze has been on long enough. This kind of knowledge lives in the hands and body. It cannot be fully written down. Some of this knowledge is simply inaccessible through text or video. A student who reads about pottery cannot gain, without practice, the physical skill that comes from years at the wheel.

(6) The apprenticeship tradition, at its best, is not about secrecy or exclusion. It is about the deliberate transmission of something that cannot be reduced to information alone. The bond between master and student creates space for a kind of knowledge that is detailed, felt in the body and hard to pass on any other way. A master does not just share steps. She passes on a way of seeing and doing that can only come from practice. In a world that values speed, the slow transfer of craft knowledge reminds us that some things can only be learned by doing.

ITEMS — PASSAGE 1

Item 1 — L.6.6 | Vocabulary acquisition | DOK 1 | MC

Read this sentence from paragraph 1 of “Passed Down by Hand.”

A student in an apprenticeship works directly with a skilled practitioner.

As used in paragraph 1, what is the meaning of the word practitioner?

- A) an individual who actively performs a particular craft or trade
- B) a teacher who delivers lectures and formal lessons in classroom settings
- C) a writer who documents and preserves traditional craft methods
- D) an inventor who develops new approaches to existing methods

Item 2 — RI.6.4 | Technical vocabulary in context | DOK 1 | MC

According to paragraph 2 of “Passed Down by Hand,” what does the word joinery describe?

- A) a type of clay used to fill and seal cracks in pottery
- B) a method for firing clay at high temperatures to harden it
- C) a way of putting pieces of wood together without nails or metal fasteners
- D) a process for measuring and matching the grain of different woods

Item 3 — RI.6.1 | Citing textual evidence | DOK 2 | MC

Which detail from the passage BEST supports the claim that apprenticeship passes knowledge through demonstration and observation rather than through explanation?

- A) “Craft communities around the world have used this model: joinery workshops in Japan, weaving communities in the Andes and pottery kilns in medieval Korea.”
- B) “In formal schooling, knowledge is typically organized into discrete lessons and transferred through explicit explanation.”
- C) “A master weaver in the Andean highlands does not describe the pattern she is creating—she creates it, and the apprentice watches, then attempts, then watches again.”
- D) “Critics of traditional apprenticeship have argued that this approach can be inefficient, even exclusionary.”

Item 4 — L.6.4b | Morphological analysis | DOK 2 | MC

Read this sentence from paragraph 3 of “Passed Down by Hand.”

What distinguishes apprenticeship from classroom instruction is the nature of the interaction between teacher and student.

Which description of the word interaction correctly explains its meaning in this sentence?

- A) The prefix inter- means “between,” so interaction means an action that happens before teaching begins.
- B) The suffix -ion means “full,” so interaction means a complete and fully completed action.

C) The suffix -ion means “without,” so interaction means something that happens without action.

D) The prefix inter- means “between,” so interaction means an action occurring between two parties.

Item 5 — RI.6.4 | Connotation of a key word | DOK 2 | MC

Read this sentence from paragraph 6 of “Passed Down by Hand.”

It is about the deliberate transmission of something that cannot be reduced to information alone.

What does the word deliberate suggest about how craft knowledge is shared?

A) The process is accidental and occurs without intent or planning.

B) The process must be completed quickly before information is lost.

C) The process is carried out with careful consideration.

D) The process is secretive and hidden from those outside the craft.

Item 6 — L.6.4a | Context clues | DOK 2 | MC

Read this sentence from paragraph 5 of “Passed Down by Hand.”

Some of this knowledge is simply inaccessible through text or video.

Based on context clues in paragraph 5, what does inaccessible mean?

A) difficult to understand when written in technical language

B) unable to be obtained through a particular means

C) communicated by one person to another

D) so complex that it requires years of study before it can be understood

Item 7 — RI.6.1 | Citing textual evidence (multi-select) | DOK 2 | TEI — Multi-Select

[Students select exactly TWO answers.]

**Select TWO details from the passage that BEST support the following claim:
Some craft knowledge must be gained through physical practice and cannot be learned by reading or watching alone.**

- A) “An apprentice who cares for a chisel learns the properties of its blade; one who sweeps shavings learns to recognize the grain of different woods.”
- B) “Some historians argue that the very closeness that makes apprenticeship effective also makes it fragile.”
- C) “The knowledge that results from this process is not reducible to a written formula; it must be lived.”
- D) “In communities where apprenticeships are passed down within families or closed guilds, the craft may become inaccessible to talented outsiders.”
- E) “The apprenticeship tradition, at its best, is not about secrecy or exclusion.”

Item 8 — RI.6.2 | Paragraph function and central idea development | DOK 3 | MC

How does paragraph 5 of “Passed Down by Hand” contribute to the development of the central idea of “Passed Down by Hand”?

- A) It introduces the central idea by establishing why the apprenticeship tradition first developed in ancient societies.
- B) It presents a counterargument by focusing on critics who have challenged traditional learning models.
- C) It deepens the central idea by describing types of knowledge that can only be acquired through physical practice.
- D) It summarizes the central idea by comparing the limitations of apprenticeship directly to formal schooling.

Item 9 — L.6.4d | Dictionary verification of a word with multiple meanings | DOK 2 | MC

Read this excerpt from paragraph 1 of “Passed Down by Hand.”

. . . the apprenticeship relationship has been central to the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation.

Read the dictionary entry below.

transmission (noun)

1. The act of sending an electronic signal, such as a radio or television broadcast
2. The act of passing something from one person or place to another

- 3. A system of gears in a vehicle that transfers power from the engine to the wheels
- 4. The spread of a disease or infection from one organism to another

Which definition BEST matches the meaning of transmission as it is used in paragraph 1?

- A) Definition 1
- B) Definition 2
- C) Definition 3
- D) Definition 4

Item 10 — RI.6.2 | Central idea | DOK 2 | MC

Which statement BEST expresses the central idea of “Passed Down by Hand”?

- A) Apprenticeship allows knowledge that would be difficult to capture through formal instruction alone to be taught and ensures the survival of certain crafts.
- B) Traditional crafts such as joinery and weaving are at risk of being lost unless apprenticeship programs are expanded and protected worldwide.
- C) Apprenticeship is a more efficient teaching method than formal schooling because it requires less time and fewer materials.
- D) Although critics have raised some concerns about craft apprenticeships, those concerns have been largely addressed by modern educational practices.

PASSAGE 2

The Weight of the Loom — Lexile: 960L | Literary

(1) Akosua had been watching her grandmother weave kente cloth for as long as she could remember, and she had always assumed it would be easy. The patterns seemed to repeat themselves in predictable rows, and the loom’s wooden heddles clicked with a rhythm that felt almost like breathing. When Nana Ama finally said she was old enough to learn, Akosua had walked to the workshop with confidence.

(2) That confidence lasted exactly four minutes. Akosua’s first attempt to pass the shuttle through the warp threads ended with three broken wires and a tangle that Nana Ama quietly unraveled without comment. Her second attempt produced a row so uneven that the colors lurched sideways like a sentence written in haste. By the third attempt, Akosua’s hands were trembling. She kept her eyes on the loom, determined not to let her grandmother see her frustration.

(3) “The pattern does not remember you yet,” Nana Ama said, settling beside her on the bench. The old woman’s hands moved to the ahenema—the small handle used to beat the threads tightly into place—and she demonstrated the proper pressure: not a slam, but a conversation. Akosua felt something loosen in her chest. She had been fighting the loom. Her grandmother was talking to it, the way you might speak to something that has its own language, its own logic. The shuttle moved between them like part of a familiar conversation.

(4) “Why does it take so long?” Akosua asked, more sharply than she meant to. Nana Ama did not answer immediately. She finished the row she was working on before looking up. “Your great-grandmother began at seven,” she said simply.

(5) Akosua tried again. This time she watched not just what her hands were doing but what they were not doing—the unconscious relaxing of grip, the small tilt of the wrist. She noticed that Nana Ama’s movements were never hurried, never labored, even when the heddles required force. Everything seemed to cost her grandmother nothing.

(6) The afternoon wore on. Akosua’s row improved, then worsened when she tried to go faster. Nana Ama said nothing. She simply wove beside her, a patient presence that neither praised nor corrected, only demonstrated.

(7) At one point, Akosua made an error she could not see—the color sequence had shifted without her noticing. She was halfway through the next row when Nana Ama reached over and touched the thread, gently tracing back to the mistake.

(8) “Here,” she said. Akosua looked. She could not believe she had not noticed. The wrong color sat in the weave like a wrong note in a familiar song.

(9) They unraveled the row together. Akosua did it slowly, pulling each thread back into its position, and as she did she began to understand what her grandmother meant: weaving was a kind of remembering. Each thread had its place not because the pattern dictated it, but because every thread before it had determined where it must go. Her hands, which had trembled an hour ago, moved with something that felt almost like certainty. The loom held them both.

(10) When the light shifted and Nana Ama said it was time to stop, Akosua sat for a moment without moving. The loom seemed to lean toward her in the afternoon stillness, as if waiting. She thought about what it would feel like to know it the way her grandmother did—to have its rhythms live in her hands, not just in her mind. She was not there yet. But for the first time, she could feel where the path began.

ITEMS — PASSAGE 2

Item 11 — RL.6.3 | Character analysis | DOK 2 | MC

Based on paragraphs 1 through 3 of “The Weight of the Loom,” what do Akosua’s actions and thoughts reveal about her?

- A) She wants to figure out how to complete the task herself without asking for help.
- B) She approaches the challenge with overconfidence that gives way to frustration and then to a new openness.
- C) She resents her grandmother for making the craft appear less difficult than it actually is.
- D) She is naturally gifted at weaving but struggles to focus on the exact methods involved.

Item 12 — RL.6.1 | Citing textual evidence | DOK 2 | MC

Which detail from paragraph 2 of “The Weight of the Loom” BEST shows that Akosua is trying to control her response to her early failures?

- A) “Akosua’s first attempt to pass the shuttle through the warp threads ended with three broken wires and a tangle . . .”
- B) “Her second attempt produced a row so uneven that the colors lurched sideways like a sentence written in haste.”
- C) “By the third attempt, Akosua’s hands were trembling.”
- D) “She kept her eyes on the loom, determined not to let her grandmother see her frustration.”

Item 13 — RL.6.4 | Figurative language — simile | DOK 2 | MC

Read this sentence from paragraph 3 of “The Weight of the Loom”.

The shuttle moved between them like part of a familiar conversation.

What does this simile suggest about how Nana Ama is working at this moment?

- A) Nana Ama disagrees with Akosua about the correct way to pass the shuttle through the warp.
- B) Akosua observes that Nana Ama’s movements are coordinated and natural.
- C) Nana Ama has already mastered the craft and can talk with Akosua while weaving.
- D) Akosua listens carefully while Nana Ama explains each step of the pattern aloud.

Item 14 — RL.6.4 | Word connotation | DOK 3 | MC

Read this excerpt from paragraph 5 of “The Weight of the Loom”..

Nana Ama’s movements were never hurried, never labored, even when the heddles required force.

What does the author’s use of the word labored suggest about Nana Ama’s level of skill?

- A) Nana Ama’s experience allows her to perform difficult movements without strain or effort.

- B) Nana Ama has grown physically tired from years of demanding work at the loom.
- C) Nana Ama works with careful attention to each individual thread.
- D) Nana Ama’s tools are specially designed to require less force than standard ones.

Item 15 — RL.6.3 | Character analysis — inferred | DOK 3 | MC

In paragraphs 4 through 6 of “The Weight of the Loom,” Akosua asks why weaving takes so long. Nana Ama finishes her row before answering, then says only: “Your great-grandmother began at seven.” She then weaves beside Akosua in silence, described as “a patient presence that neither praised nor corrected, only demonstrated.”

What do Nana Ama’s actions and words reveal about her as a teacher?

- A) She refuses to explain her methods because she believes weaving should remain a closely guarded family tradition.
- B) She believes Akosua is not yet mature enough to understand why the craft demands so much time.
- C) She teaches through example rather than explanation, trusting that practice will teach what words cannot.
- D) She is disappointed in Akosua’s early progress and is waiting for improvement before offering direct instruction.

Item 16 — L.6.4 | Word meaning from context | DOK 1 | MC

Read this sentence from paragraph 2 of “The Weight of the Loom”.

Akosua’s first attempt to pass the shuttle through the warp threads ended with three broken wires and a tangle that Nana Ama quietly unraveled without comment.

What does the word unraveled mean?

- A) destroyed permanently
- B) detangled carefully
- C) improved greatly
- D) secured tightly

Item 17 — L.6.1 | Pronoun reference | DOK 1 | MC

Read this sentence from paragraph 3 of “The Weight of the Loom”.

Her grandmother was talking to it, the way you might speak to something that has its own language, its own logic.

What does the word it refer to in this sentence?

- A) the knowledge that comes with practice
- B) the shuttle
- C) the pattern being created in the kente cloth
- D) the loom

Item 18 — L.6.5 | Figurative language — personification | DOK 2 | MC

Read this sentence from paragraph 10 of “The Weight of the Loom”.

The loom seemed to lean toward her in the afternoon stillness, as if waiting.

This is an example of personification. What does this personification suggest?

- A) Akosua fears the loom will fall over if she does not hold it in place.
- B) The loom is unsteady, and Akosua will need to repair it before the next lesson.
- C) The craft itself is drawing Akosua toward it, ready for her to keep going.
- D) Akosua is so exhausted from her work that she imagines the loom is moving.

Item 19 — RL.6.1 | Citing textual evidence (multi-select) | DOK 3 | TEI — Multi-Select
[Students select exactly TWO answers.]

Select TWO details from “The Weight of the Loom” that show how Akosua’s understanding of weaving changes by the end of the story.

- A) “Akosua had walked to the workshop with confidence.”
- B) “Akosua felt something loosen in her chest.”
- C) “Akosua’s row improved, then worsened when she tried to go faster.”

D) “At one point, Akosua made an error she could not see—the color sequence had shifted without her noticing.”

E) “. . . weaving was a kind of remembering. Each thread had its place not because the pattern dictated it, but because every thread before it had determined where it must go.”

Item 20 — RL.6.2 | Summary | DOK 2 | MC

Which sentence BEST summarizes “The Weight of the Loom”?

A) A girl named Akosua visits her grandmother and discovers that traditional kente weaving is her new passion.

B) Akosua’s repeated failures at the loom lead her to decide she is not yet ready to become a weaver.

C) Through a series of failures at the loom and her grandmother’s calm example, Akosua begins to understand that weaving is a link to the generations who came before her.

D) Akosua and her grandmother spend an afternoon weaving together, and Nana Ama teaches Akosua the step-by-step process for creating kente patterns.

Item 21 — RL.6.2 | Theme | DOK 3 | MC

Which statement BEST expresses a theme of “The Weight of the Loom”?

A) True knowledge of a craft is gained through shared practice and the connection between people and their traditions.

B) A student can master a craft through persistence and independent practice.

C) Young people should be required to learn traditional crafts before they are old enough to question their value.

D) People learn best when they are given time to experiment freely.

SPELLING

Administrator note: Read the word, then read the sentence, then repeat the word clearly, and pause for students to write.

Item 22 — L.6.2 | Spelling | DOK 1 | FITB

Commission

*The captain received a **commission** to lead the new expedition.*

Commission

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 23 — L.6.2 | Spelling | DOK 1 | FITB

Combustible

*The scientists warned that the chemical mixture was **combustible**.*

Combustible

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 24 — L.6.2 | Spelling | DOK 1 | FITB

Emissary

*The queen sent an **emissary** to deliver her message to the neighboring kingdom.*

Emissary

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 25 — L.6.2 | Spelling | DOK 1 | FITB

Derision

*The crowd laughed with **derision** when the plan was first announced.*

Derision

Write the spelling word you heard:
