

Threads & Themes Grade 7, Unit 3, Investigation 1 Summative Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PASSAGE 1

What We Carry

A scene from a one-act play

(1) [A narrow practice room tucked into a community center on the east side of the city, late afternoon in November 1999. The room is worn and quiet, with an old upright piano leaning against one wall and a chair near the door. MARCO VARGAS, age seventeen, sits at the piano, a folded letter resting on the instrument's lid. He plays the opening measures of a Beethoven sonata, stops abruptly, and stares at his hands as if they belong to someone else.]

(2) **MARCO:** (to himself) Third time. Every time, the fourth bar.

(3) [He begins the sonata once more, leaning forward with each measure, as though pushing the piano through mud. He breaks off mid-phrase, and for several seconds the only sound in the room is his own breathing. In the silence that follows, he unfolds the letter slowly and reads the first line aloud, quietly, as though testing whether the words are real.]

(4) **MARCO:** "The Committee is pleased to offer you a full-tuition fellowship for the Summer Intensive at the New England Conservatory."

(5) [He refolds the letter carefully, pressing each crease. The door opens without any knock, and ELENA VARGAS, age twenty-four, steps in carrying a paper grocery bag. She is still wearing the stained apron from her shift at their uncle's auto-body shop, and her hands are still gray with engine grease. Her eyes find the letter on the piano almost at once.]

(6) **ELENA:** Tío Roberto said you'd be here.

(7) **MARCO:** Practice room closes at six.

(8) **ELENA:** It's six-twenty.

(9) [A beat. She sets the grocery bag down on the folding chair and waits for him to turn around, but MARCO keeps his back to the door, his fingers resting on the cool surface of the keys as if the piano itself were steadier than anything he might say.]

(10) **ELENA:** Papá asked where you were.

(11) **MARCO:** How is he?

(12) **ELENA:** He ate half the soup. Which is more than yesterday. The doctor says four months before he can hold a wrench again. Maybe six.

(13) [He plays a slow, deliberate chord. He holds it until the sound thins and hollows out into the room, and even after his hands lift from the keys the silence that remains seems to keep the chord's shape.]

(14) MARCO: Elena—

(15) ELENA: Don't.

(16) MARCO: You don't even know what I was going to—

(17) ELENA: Yes, I do. That letter has been sitting on the kitchen table for a week, Marco. You think I didn't look?

(18) [He turns on the bench to face her for the first time, his hands slipping from the keys into his lap.]

(19) MARCO: Then you know it's a full ride. They cover the tuition and the housing, too.

(20) ELENA: They don't cover Papá. They don't cover the shop. You think Tío Roberto can run the business by himself for three months, while a kid who has been there every summer since he was twelve is up in Boston?

(21) [MARCO's hands tremble. He lowers them into his lap where she cannot see.]

(22) MARCO: He could hire somebody.

(23) ELENA: With what money? The insurance company hasn't paid a dime. The lawyer says it might be another year.

(24) MARCO: (quieter) I've worked for that scholarship since I was ten.

(25) ELENA: I know. Mamá knows. Papá knows. That's why nobody wanted to tell you.

(26) [A long silence settles into the room. MARCO looks at the piano the way a person looks at a door that has just closed on something important, his gaze steady yet unfocused.]

(27) MARCO: What if I go to Boston, and I come home, and I never get another chance like this?

(28) ELENA: What if you don't go, Marco, and you find out you are bigger than the conservatory anyway?

(29) [She steps toward him, and for a moment it looks as if she will put a hand on his shoulder. She balks. Her hand is dirty; she does not want to leave a mark on his sweatshirt. She crosses her arms instead.]

(30) ELENA: I am not telling you not to go. I am telling you don't decide tonight. Eat with us first.

(31) [MARCO nods once without speaking. ELENA picks up the grocery bag and moves toward the door, stopping in the frame as though one more thing needs to be said before she can leave.]

(32) ELENA: He is proud of you, Marco. Even on the days he cannot find the words to say so.

(33) [She leaves. The door closes behind her. MARCO sits in silence for a long time. At last he places his hands back on the keys and begins the sonata again, very softly, from the beginning. As he reaches the fourth bar, the stage lights dim. This time he does not stop.]

ITEMS — PASSAGE 1

Item 1

Read this stage direction from paragraph 3 of “What We Carry.”

He begins the sonata once more, leaning forward with each measure, as though pushing the piano through mud.

Why does the playwright compare Marco’s playing to “pushing the piano through mud”?

- A) to show that Marco is playing an old and broken piano
- B) to show that Marco is tired from practicing for too long
- C) to show that Marco’s feelings make the music feel heavy
- D) to show that Marco is learning to play a difficult new piece

Item 2

Read this sentence from paragraph 13 of “What We Carry.”

He plays a slow, deliberate chord. He holds it until the sound thins and hollows out into the room.

What does the phrase hollows out suggest about Marco’s emotional state at this moment?

- A) He feels increasingly frustrated that he cannot play the piece correctly.
- B) He feels empty and uncertain as he faces a difficult decision.
- C) He feels focused and determined to improve his playing.
- D) He feels hesitant and unsure about what to do next.

Item 3

Select the TWO details from “What We Carry” that BEST show what Elena is most concerned about regarding the scholarship.

- A) “They don’t cover Papá. They don’t cover the shop.”
- B) “Mamá knows. Papá knows. That’s why nobody wanted to tell you.”
- C) “That letter has been sitting on the kitchen table for a week, Marco.”
- D) “I am not telling you not to go. I am telling you don’t decide tonight.”
- E) “You think Tío Roberto can run the business by himself for three months . . . ?”

Item 4

Read this stage direction from paragraph 21 of “What We Carry.”

MARCO's hands tremble. He lowers them into his lap where she cannot see.

What does Marco's action in this stage direction MOST reveal about his response to the situation with Elena?

- A) He is trying to end the conversation with Elena.
- B) He is hiding his emotions about the decision from Elena.
- C) He is trying to stay focused on the conversation with Elena.
- D) He is pausing to think carefully about how to respond to Elena.

Item 5

Select the TWO details from "What We Carry" that BEST show how Elena's perspective on the scholarship DIFFERS from Marco's.

- A) Elena knows that the scholarship letter has been on the kitchen table for a week, while Marco has kept the news to himself.
- B) Elena acknowledges that the scholarship is important, while Marco emphasizes how much work he put in to earn it.
- C) Elena reminds Marco that the insurance has not paid, while Marco focuses on the details of what the scholarship covers.
- D) Elena refers to the family and the shop when she speaks, while Marco refers to the scholarship and his own years of work.
- E) Elena asks Marco what he plans to do about the scholarship, while Marco says he is still thinking about his decision.

Item 6

Read this passage from "What We Carry."

She steps toward him, and for a moment it looks as if she will put a hand on his shoulder. She balks. Her hand is dirty; she does not want to leave a mark on his sweatshirt. She crosses her arms instead.

Which context clues BEST help the reader determine the meaning of balks?

- A) "She steps toward him" and "Her hand is dirty"
- B) "she does not want to leave a mark" and "on his sweatshirt"
- C) "it looks as if she will put a hand on his shoulder" and "She crosses her arms instead"
- D) "for a moment it looks as if" and "she does not want to leave a mark on his sweatshirt"

Item 7

How does the combination of dialogue and stage directions in "What We Carry" shape the reader's understanding of Marco's situation?

- A) The stage directions show Marco's nervous movements at the piano, while the dialogue explains Elena's view of the family problem.

- B)** The stage directions reveal Marco’s emotional strain, while the dialogue shows how he responds to that strain and expresses his thinking aloud.
- C)** The stage directions show Marco’s repeated struggle with the piano, while the dialogue shows Elena urging him to think about his family’s needs.
- D)** The stage directions provide background details about the setting, while the dialogue focuses on telling the reader what will happen next in the story.

Item 8

Read this stage direction from paragraph 33 of “What We Carry.”

[She leaves. The door closes behind her. MARCO sits in silence for a long time. At last he places his hands back on the keys and begins the sonata again, very softly, from the beginning. As he reaches the fourth bar, the stage lights dim. This time he does not stop.]

What would watching a live, acted version of “What We Carry” help the viewer understand about Marco’s emotional state that reading the written stage directions does less directly?

- A)** how Marco’s facial expressions and body language show his hesitation and renewed focus at the piano
- B)** how the stage lighting appears and changes as Marco continues playing through the scene
- C)** how long of a time Marco remains seated in silence at the piano before he begins playing the sonata again
- D)** how Marco begins playing the sonata again after Elena leaves the room and continues the piece

PASSAGE 2

The Road Between

(1) From the passenger seat of her mother’s truck, Tamika watched the white fence of the Wiley farm slide past the window for the last time. The sun was almost down, and the sycamore near the barn stood alone against the sky. Somebody had nailed a square of fresh plywood to the gate. The real estate sign had been anchored in the ditch for four months already, but the plywood was new.

(2) “You all right?” her mother asked.

(3) Tamika did not answer because she did not entirely trust her voice to stay level if she used it. She was fourteen, and at the breakfast table that morning, while her mother stood washing the last of their dishes, she had made a private promise to herself that she would not cry until the truck had carried them across the county line.

(4) The truck took the curve past the milk barn. The paint on the barn was peeling in long strips. Her grandmother, who had died in April, used to say that a peeling barn was just molting, the way a bird molts—shedding what had been worn out because something new was due. It was nothing to grieve, she would say. Tamika tried to hold that idea steady in her head, the way her grandmother herself had once held ideas, but it slid away from her like water cupped in a hand.

(5) She closed her eyes.

(6) She was six years old, and her grandmother was standing in the pasture in her barn coat, holding a bottle to feed a calf that had been refused by its mother. The calf was two days old, and Grandma was teaching Tamika how to offer it the bottle without startling it. *You hold it steady*, her grandmother said. *Not tight. Steady. A scared thing knows the difference.* Tamika felt afraid and also proud, the two feelings braided together in a way she did not yet have words for.

(7) *Some work*, her grandmother said, without looking up from the calf, *you don't do because it pays. You do it because it is yours to do.*

(8) Tamika opened her eyes, and for a moment the memory and the moving road seemed to overlap. The farm was behind them now, slipping past in pieces the way something does when it refuses to stay whole in the mind. The road narrowed into a curve lined with goldenrod and she caught her last sight of the sycamore in the side mirror—smaller, smaller, and then not there.

(9) Her mother switched on the headlights and the dim gold of the dashboard came up between them. “Your granddaddy’s granddaddy bought that land in 1911,” she said, as though Tamika had not heard the story a hundred times. “Paid cash. Five generations, counting you.”

(10) “Four,” Tamika said. “I didn’t farm it.”

(11) Her mother glanced at her and squeezed Tamika’s shoulder before returning her hand to the wheel.

(12) They passed a billboard for a dairy company Tamika had never heard of. The price on a gallon of milk at the supermarket was lower than what it cost her family to produce one. Tamika had heard her mother explain this at the kitchen table, to the lawyer, to the man from the co-op, to Aunt Cora, and each time her mother had used the same tired, level voice, the voice of someone who had already finished crying about a thing and needed to keep walking.

(13) “Where are we going to live?” Tamika asked.

(14) “Aunt Cora’s, through the school year. Then we’ll see.”

(15) Tamika nodded without answering, trying not to think about the boxes stacked in the bed of the truck behind her. Most of their furniture had been sold to pay bills that never seemed to stop arriving. The quilts her grandmother had pieced together were folded into a plastic tub in the back. Tamika’s science project on soil erosion was resting on top of the tub, wrapped in one of her mother’s clean dish towels to keep the poster board from bending. She was grateful for that, at least—that her mother had thought of it.

(16) The truck crossed the county line, and Tamika counted to ten inside her head. Then she counted to ten again. Then, because the promise had held as long as it was meant to hold, she pressed her forehead against the cold window and let herself cry without making a sound—because the farm was gone, but the lesson in the pasture wasn't, and somewhere in the difference between those two things was a person she still had to become.

(17) Outside, the road ran on, a gray ribbon unspooling between the hills. Her mother drove without speaking. Tamika watched the dark come down over the fields behind them and the fields still ahead.

ITEMS — PASSAGE 2

Item 9

Read these sentences from paragraph 4 of “The Road Between.”

The paint on the barn was peeling in long strips. Her grandmother, who had died in April, used to say that a peeling barn was just molting, the way a bird molts—shedding what had been worn out because something new was due. It was nothing to grieve, she would say.

In this passage, the barn is compared to a molting bird. What does this comparison reveal about Tamika’s grandmother’s perspective?

- A) She believed that grief should be avoided whenever possible.
- B) She believed that farm life is more important than human sadness.
- C) She believed that loss is a natural part of growing into something new.
- D) She believed that old buildings should be torn down before they fall apart.

Item 10

In “The Road Between,” how does the memory of Tamika feeding the calf with her grandmother (paragraphs 5–7) contribute to the development of the central idea of the passage?

- A) It explains the financial problems that led the family to sell the farm.
- B) It shows a moment when Tamika felt both unsure and proud as she learned from her grandmother.
- C) It highlights the skills Tamika will need if she continues working on a farm.
- D) It shows how Tamika’s experience with her grandmother continues to shape her thinking as she leaves the farm.

Item 11

Read these sentences from paragraphs 4 and 8 of “The Road Between.”

Tamika tried to hold that idea steady in her head, the way her grandmother herself had once held ideas, but it slid away from her like water cupped in a hand.

The farm was behind them now, slipping past in pieces the way something does when it refuses to stay whole in the mind.

How do these images contribute to the meaning of the passage?

- A) They show that Tamika is struggling to hold on to her understanding and memories as she leaves the farm.
- B) They show that Tamika is confused about why her family is moving away from the farm.
- C) They show that Tamika is beginning to see the farm differently as she leaves it behind.
- D) They show that Tamika is trying to forget the farm as quickly as possible.

Item 12

How does Tamika’s thinking change across the course of “The Road Between”?

- A) She moves from feeling angry at her mother to accepting her mother’s decision.
- B) She moves from wanting to forget the farm to wanting to remember every part of it.
- C) She moves from trying not to cry about leaving the farm to accepting its loss and what it taught her.
- D) She moves from remembering her grandmother’s guidance to questioning whether those lessons still matter.

Item 13

Read this sentence from “The Road Between.”

Tamika had heard her mother explain this at the kitchen table, to the lawyer, to the man from the co-op, to Aunt Cora, and each time her mother had used the same tired, level voice, the voice of someone who had already finished crying about a thing and needed to keep walking.

Which phrases from this sentence BEST help the reader determine the meaning of level as it is used here?

- A) “Tamika had her her mother explain” and “the voice of someone”
- B) “tired” and “someone who had already finished crying”
- C) “the same” and “each time her mother”
- D) “explain this” and “keep walking”

Item 14

Select the TWO details from “The Road Between” that BEST show why Tamika’s family is leaving the farm.

- A) “Tamika had heard her mother explain this at the kitchen table, to the lawyer, to the man from the co-op, to Aunt Cora . . .”

- B) “The price on a gallon of milk at the supermarket was lower than what it cost her family to produce one.”
- C) “Most of their furniture had been sold to pay bills that never seemed to stop arriving.”
- D) “Your granddaddy’s granddaddy bought that land in 1911.”
- E) “The paint on the barn was peeling in long strips.”

Item 15

Read this sentence from “The Road Between.”

She was grateful for that, at least—that her mother had thought of it.

Based on your knowledge of the root grat-, what does grateful mean as it is used in this sentence?

- A) full of regret
- B) full of sadness
- C) full of surprise
- D) full of thankfulness

Item 16

Select the TWO details from “The Road Between” that BEST show how Tamika’s emotional response to leaving the farm differs from her mother’s.

- A) Tamika promises herself she will not cry until they cross the county line, while her mother speaks in a calm, steady voice about the situation.
- B) Tamika remembers feeding the calf with her grandmother, while her mother talks about how long the land has been in the family.
- C) Tamika presses her forehead against the window and cries silently, while her mother continues driving without speaking.
- D) Tamika says, “I didn’t farm it,” while her mother explains that the land has been in the family for generations.
- E) Tamika asks where they will live, while her mother answers briefly and focuses on practical plans.

Item 17

Which statement BEST expresses a central theme of “The Road Between”?

- A) Growing up on a farm teaches lessons that are difficult to understand until later in life.
- B) Economic challenges can force families to give up traditions they have kept for generations.
- C) Remembering the past is important, but building a future depends on being able to let go of it.

D) What we learn from the people who raised us can stay with us even when the places we learned it are gone.

SPELLING

Item 18

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 19

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 20

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 21

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 22

Write the spelling word you heard:
