

Threads & Themes Grade 8, Unit 2, Investigation 1 Summative Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PASSAGE 1

“The Loudest Voice”

(1) The first thing Meera noticed when she walked into the community center with her mother was the smell of coffee, floor wax, and something sharper underneath—the specific tension of a room whose occupants have already committed to the opinions they intend to express. Folding chairs had been arranged in rows facing a portable podium, and every seat, as far back as Meera could see, was filled.

(2) By seven o’clock, the session had been convened and the meeting was officially called to order. The room that Meera’s mother had described as “a few neighbors getting together” contained nearly a hundred people. Meera had expected maybe forty. She folded herself into a chair near the back, accepted the yellow agenda paper from a man who pressed it into her hand without looking at her, and read: “Proposed Designation of Riverside Park as a National Monument.”

(3) The man at the podium was named Mr. Carrigan. He had the kind of voice that carried without effort, a warm baritone that arrived in the back row feeling personal, as though he were speaking to each listener individually rather than to a room. He wore no tie. He set his papers down on the podium with deliberate casualness, as if delivering news he had not planned to deliver but felt a responsibility to share.

(4) “This park,” Carrigan said, drawing the silence out before he spoke, “is yours.” He paused again. “It has been yours for sixty years, and in eighteen months, if this plan goes through, you will need a permit to walk through it.”

(5) The room murmured, and Meera’s mother leaned forward while Meera watched Carrigan raise his hands slightly, palms outward, as though calming a crowd that had not yet started to surge.

(6) What followed was a series of statistics. Meera had no way to check them, and neither, she suspected, did most people in the room. In between, Carrigan described the acres “handed over,” the trees “sacrificed,” the children’s programs “eliminated.” Each arrived with a verb that did heavy work—not removed but slashed; not sold but surrendered. She noticed this the way she might notice a coin on the sidewalk when she was late to school, unsure at first whether it was worth stopping for, but aware enough to remember that she had.

(7) “They are betting,” Carrigan said, his voice dropping to something almost intimate, “that you are too busy to pay attention . . . that you’ll read the headlines and go back to your lives. They are betting that you do not care.” He let the word *care* sit in the air. “I believe they are wrong.”

(8) The applause was immediate and galvanizing. Meera felt the pull of it, the warm sense of belonging to something that had just declared itself against an enemy. Her mother was clapping

hard, her face lit with the particular brightness of someone who has found confirmation for something she already believed.

(9) Meera did not clap. She was still thinking about the verb *surrendered*. Her silence felt like a small act of dissent she had not consciously planned.

(10) After the applause settled, Carrigan invited questions. Three people stood to speak, and each affirmed what Carrigan had said rather than questioning it. The room absorbed each contribution the way water accepts dye—the whole thing growing darker and more certain with each addition.

(11) Meera raised her hand, and her mother turned, eyebrows raised.

(12) “How many children’s programs are actually being eliminated?” Meera asked when Carrigan called on her. “Is there a specific number? And are there any new programs being planned that would benefit the community?”

(13) A few heads turned in her direction with what she could only describe as mild irritation, as though she had spoken out of turn.

(14) Carrigan smiled. “We are still reviewing the documentation,” he said smoothly. “The important thing is the direction this is heading.” He moved immediately to the next raised hand.

(15) Meera sat with that answer for a long moment. Direction was not a number; it was not a fact. It was a way of saying something without saying anything, a space shaped like an answer but empty at its center. But the room had already moved on, the applause had already happened, and the certainty had already settled into the chairs.

(16) She thought: So this is how it works.

ITEMS — PASSAGE 1

Item 1

Read this excerpt from paragraph 2 of “The Loudest Voice.”

By seven o’clock, the session had been convened and the meeting was officially called to order. The room that Meera’s mother had described as “a few neighbors getting together” contained nearly a hundred people.

Which phrase from the excerpt MOST helps the reader determine the meaning of the word “convened”?

- A) “seven o’clock”
- B) “the session”
- C) “officially called to order”
- D) “nearly a hundred people”

Item 2

In paragraph 4, what does Carrigan claim will happen if the plan for Riverside Park is approved?

- A) Residents will need a permit to walk through the park.

- B) The park will be given to a private developer.
- C) Programs in the park will be permanently closed.
- D) Residents will lose their right to vote on future changes to the park.

Item 3

Read this sentence from paragraph 6 of “The Loudest Voice.”

In between, Carrigan described the acres “handed over,” the trees “sacrificed,” the children’s programs “eliminated.”

How does Carrigan’s use of the word “eliminated” affect the audience’s understanding of the park changes?

- A) It suggests the changes are temporary and can be reversed with enough community effort.
- B) It implies the park managers acted rashly when making decisions about programs.
- C) It invites an objective group discussion of the facts.
- D) It makes the loss of the programs feel total and deliberate.

Item 4

Read this sentence from paragraph 6 of “The Loudest Voice.”

Each arrived with a verb that did heavy work—not removed but slashed; not sold but surrendered.

What does the word “surrendered” suggest about the park changes that the word “sold” does not?

- A) that the changes were made quickly
- B) that the price paid for the park was too high
- C) that the action is felt as an unfortunate loss
- D) that the changes will benefit the park over time

Item 5

Read this sentence from paragraph 9 of “The Loudest Voice.”

Her silence felt like a small act of dissent she had not consciously planned.

The word “dissent” contains the prefix dis-, meaning “opposite” or “apart from.” Based on this prefix and the context of the sentence, what does “dissent” mean?

- A) a strong feeling of agreement with a group decision
- B) a show of opposition to what others accept
- C) a deliberate plan to change the minds of others
- D) a sudden outburst of emotion that disrupts a gathering

Item 6

Which sentence BEST summarizes “The Loudest Voice”?

- A) Meera attends a community meeting where a speaker uses emotionally charged language about a park plan, and Meera wonders about the gap between the speaker’s speech and the facts.
- B) A skilled speaker convinces a community to oppose a park development plan by revealing the ways the plan will affect their way of life.
- C) Meera and her mother disagree about how to respond to a community meeting after a speaker presents alarming statistics about a local park.
- D) A community meeting turns tense when residents realize a speaker has misrepresented the facts about what the government intends to do.

Item 7

Put the following events in the order they occur in “The Loudest Voice.”

Drag the tiles into the correct sequence from first to last.

Tile A: Meera notices that Carrigan’s word choices seem more intense than the situation requires, though she is not yet sure what to make of it.

Tile B: Meera asks Carrigan for specific numbers to support his claim about the children’s programs.

Tile C: Meera arrives at the meeting and notices that the room is far more crowded than she expected.

Tile D: Meera privately identifies the pattern she has been observing throughout Carrigan’s speech.

Item 8

Which statement BEST describes the effect of dramatic irony in “The Loudest Voice”?

- A) It allows the reader to feel surprised at the end when Meera finally understands Carrigan’s approach.
- B) It causes the reader to distrust Meera’s thoughts because she takes longer than expected to recognize Carrigan’s intentions.
- C) It creates suspense by letting the reader recognize Carrigan’s style of speaking before Meera can fully name it.
- D) It suggests that Carrigan’s speech contains false information that neither the reader nor Meera can check.

PASSAGE 2

“The Signal Compositor” — Lexile: approx. 860L | Literary

(1) The signal room on Level Four of Alcyone Station was cooler than the rest of the habitat and always quiet—a necessary condition for compositing, the precise work of arranging a transmission so it reaches every deck in the correct format. Seren settled into the seat before the encoding console, adjusted the light level, the artificial kind that the lower levels ran on continuously, and pulled up the day’s first file.

(2) The file had been sent by the Resident Assembly that morning, tagged urgent, with a note that it needed to reach all residential decks before the evening rotation. Seren opened it and began reviewing it carefully, having learned early on not to transmit anything without reading it all the way through first.

(3) THE COUNCIL CLAIMS YOUR SUNLIGHT: YOUR ACCESS TO THE SOL DECK WILL BE CUT IN HALF

(4) Below the headline, a transcript described the Council’s new access policy. The Sol Deck morning window would be reduced from four hours to two and reservation wait times would double. Seren already knew the changes would take effect at the start of the next rotation cycle. The same information had come through the official Council channel two days earlier. The facts in the broadcast were accurate.

(5) *But the words.*

(6) “Claims,” Seren said quietly, not to anyone. The Sol Deck, the one section of the station where the hull panels opened to full, unfiltered sunlight, was the most contested space in the habitat. But had the Council claimed it? The word implied seizure, an aggressive act. What the Council had actually done was adjust a schedule.

(7) Deva, the senior compositor at the next station, glanced over. “Something wrong with the signal structure?”

(8) “The language,” Seren said. “The facts are accurate, but the word choices—”

(9) “The word choices are effective,” Deva said, without pausing. “People feel the loss of their Sol time, and they need to understand why it matters.”

(10) Seren continued reviewing the file into the next section, which read: **WHILE RESIDENTS ARE STRIPPED OF MORNING LIGHT, THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEVELS RETAIN PRIORITY ACCESS.** This was technically true. The upper administrative decks had separate access routes to the Sol Deck and were not subject to the new reservation system. But the verb *stripped* landed differently than “reduced” or “adjusted”: it was the word you used when something was taken by force.

(11) “The facts do not need to be arranged to make the Council’s decision appear more sinister than it may actually be,” Seren said carefully.

(12) “They need,” Deva replied, with the patience of someone explaining a principle they consider obvious, “to be felt, not just understood. An articulate argument—one shaped so that people actually feel what it means—is not the same as a lie. The Assembly is not making anything up. They are making sure the facts land.”

(13) Seren thought about this. The facts were accurate. The Sol Deck reduction was real. The unequal access was real. The situation deserved attention. But the language seemed to be doing something extra. It was pushing the listener toward one conclusion before they had a chance to consider others. Had the Council acted out of corruption? Or simply poor judgment? The broadcast had already decided—without waiting for anyone to find out.

(14) Seren thought about the word *calibration*, the term the station’s founding documents used when describing how policy decisions were to be weighed against competing resident needs. *Calibrated* suggested careful measurement. The broadcast’s language suggested something else entirely: a deliberate offense.

(15) Before approving the transmission, Seren opened the station’s public record and searched for the Council’s official announcement. It was there: two paragraphs, dry and administrative, with no explanation given for the change. That absence was also a kind of fact. There might be reasons the Council had not yet shared. Or there might not be. Either way, the broadcast had already supplied its own answer, and Seren had not yet looked hard enough to know if that answer was right.

(16) The transmission was encoded and queued, and then Seren approved it and watched the signal counter begin its cycle.

(17) Then Seren opened a new, private file and typed: *Sol Deck morning access reduced from four hours to two, effective next rotation cycle. Administrative decks retain separate access routes. Reservation wait times doubled. The Council’s official statement offers no explanation. Reasons unknown. Further investigation required.*

(18) The sentences were plainer than the broadcast. The distortion, Seren now understood, had not been produced by any false statement. Instead, it had been produced through selection: the verbs chosen to carry the facts, the arrangement designed to make one conclusion feel like the only possible one.

(19) Seren saved the file and logged off for the rotation break. It was not yet clear what the investigation would turn up, or what to do with what was found. But it seemed important to have said it plainly somewhere, and to keep asking—before only the broadcast’s version of events remained.

ITEMS — PASSAGE 2

Item 9

Read this sentence from paragraph 1 of “The Signal Composer:”

The signal room on Level Four of Alcyone Station was cooler than the rest of the habitat and always quiet—a necessary condition for compositing, the precise work of arranging a transmission so it reaches every deck in the correct format.

Which phrase from the sentence MOST helps the reader understand the meaning of the word “transmission” in this sentence?

- A) “rest of the habitat”
- B) “always quiet”
- C) “precise work”

D) “reaches every deck”

Item 10

Read these sentences from paragraph 6 of “The Signal Composer.”

“Claims,” Seren said quietly, not to anyone. The Sol Deck, the one section of the station where the hull panels opened to full, unfiltered sunlight, was the most contested space in the habitat. But had the Council claimed it?

What does the word “claimed” suggest about the Council’s actions?

- A) that the Council took control of something that did not belong to it
- B) that the Council made a public announcement about changes it planned to make
- C) that the Council acted after receiving approval from residents of the station
- D) that the Council was responding to a problem that had been growing for a long time

Item 11

Read this sentence from paragraph 10 of “The Signal Composer.”

Seren continued reviewing the file into the next section, which read: **WHILE RESIDENTS ARE STRIPPED OF MORNING LIGHT, THE ADMINISTRATIVE LEVELS RETAIN PRIORITY ACCESS.**

How does the use of the word “stripped” affect the reader’s understanding of the situation?

- A) It indicates that the Council’s decision was made following proper procedures.
- B) It makes the loss of Sol Deck access feel forceful and unjust.
- C) It suggests that Seren agrees with this description of the Council’s actions.
- D) It proves that the Council is being unkind to the residents.

Item 12

Seren is concerned that the broadcast’s language is not objective. Select the TWO excerpts from the passage that BEST support this idea.

- A) “The file had been sent by the Resident Assembly that morning, tagged urgent, with a note that it needed to reach all residential decks before the evening rotation.” (paragraph 2)
- B) “The facts in the broadcast were accurate.” (paragraph 4)
- C) “The facts do not need to be arranged to make the Council’s decision appear more sinister than it may actually be.” (paragraph 11)
- D) “It was pushing the listener toward one conclusion before they had a chance to consider others.” (paragraph 13)
- E) “Seren thought about the word calibration, the term the station’s founding documents used when describing how policy decisions were to be weighed against competing resident needs.” (paragraph 14)

Item 13

Read this sentence from paragraph 12 of “The Signal Composer.”

An articulate argument—one shaped so that people actually feel what it means—is not the same as a lie.

The word “articulate” comes from the Latin root articul-, meaning “to divide into parts” or “to express distinctly.” Based on this root and the context of the sentence, what does “articulate” mean as it is used in the sentence?

- A) emotionally powerful and able to persuade others
- B) misleading and designed to make something false appear accurate
- C) clearly stated so that the meaning is understood
- D) simple so as to use the fewest possible words to make a point

Item 14

Which statement BEST expresses a theme developed in “The Signal Compositor”?

- A) People in positions of authority cannot be trusted to share information with those they govern.
- B) Technology makes it easier to spread messages but harder to determine if those messages are true.
- C) Workers who follow instructions they disagree with are responsible for the harm those instructions cause.
- D) The way information is presented can influence how it is understood by others.

Item 15

How does Seren’s response to the broadcast change between paragraph 6 and paragraph 19?

- A) Seren moves from focusing on a single word to thinking more generally about the impact of the message.
- B) Seren moves from agreeing with the Resident Assembly’s message to rejecting it after discovering the Council’s announcement was untrue.
- C) Seren moves from quietly accepting the task to openly confronting Deva about whether to share the provided content.
- D) Seren moves from understanding the technical aspects of signal compositing to questioning whether the job itself is worth doing.

Item 16

Read paragraph 3 from “The Signal Compositor.”

THE COUNCIL CLAIMS YOUR SUNLIGHT: YOUR ACCESS TO THE SOL DECK WILL BE CUT IN HALF

What does the reader likely understand about this broadcast headline that Seren does not fully realize until paragraph 18?

- A) The headline contains factual errors that will eventually be corrected.
- B) The headline includes words that frame a policy change as an act of hostility.
- C) The headline will persuade residents to take action against the Council in ways the Resident Assembly had not intended.
- D) The headline reveals that the Resident Assembly has access to information the Council has hidden from residents.

SPELLING

Item 17

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 18

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 19

Write the spelling word you heard:

Item 20

Write the spelling word you heard:
