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**Practicing for Success: STAAR  
Reading Language Arts  
Grade 4**

**This sample includes the following:**

**Student Book pages** (8 pages)

- Cover and Table of Contents
- Guided Practice pages
- Partner Practice pages
- Independent Practice pages

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Grade

4

*Practicing for Success*



**Student Book**

**UPDATED  
for the  
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REDESIGN**



**Reading Language Arts**

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# Characterization and Theme

## Lesson Focus

I can find the theme of a story by noticing how characters change and grow through conflict.

1. What are some problems characters can face in a story?
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## Notice When Characters Change

1. Find the problem in the story.
2. Notice how the character changes. Ask yourself, "How are they acting, speaking, or thinking differently than before?"
3. Name what a character learns.

## Guided Practice

Pay attention to the steps your teacher takes as they identify the problem a character faces.

### The Golden Staff: A South American Myth

- 1 Long ago, at the dawn of time, the sun god, Inti, looked down on the people, and he felt pity for them. He decided that the cleverest of his four sons and his daughter should rule over everyone and teach them how to live in a better way. Their names were Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo.
- 2 However, Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo didn't realize their other three brothers wanted to rule the new empire all by themselves. Just as Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo set out on their journey, the brothers stepped out of a nearby cave. Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo thought their siblings had come to help them, so they greeted their brothers warmly and set out together to teach the people. But they hadn't been gone long when one of their brothers, Ayar Cachi, made fun of the humans.
- 3 "Look at them!" he sneered. "Who would want to teach them? What a waste of my powers! I can knock down hills with a single shot of my sling!" And Ayar Cachi destroyed a hill with his slingshot, injuring the people who lived there. Manco Cápac was so angered by his brother, he used his powers to send Ayar Cachi back to the cave where he came from and sealed him inside. On seeing this, the second brother, Ayar Uchu, grew fearful of Manco Cápac's strength.
- 4 "Perhaps I will go back to the cave and look after the people from there." And he ran back to the cave as quickly as he could. When Inti, the sun god, saw this, he turned Ayar Uchu into stone to punish him for his cowardice. The third brother, Ayar Auca, was, by now, quaking with fear. He ran off into the forest and was never seen again!
- 5 And so, as Inti first intended, only Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo remained. The siblings traveled far and wide, uniting different tribes, teaching them how to build their own homes and villages and how to read and write.

# Characterization and Theme

**Directions:** Use the text on page 18 to answer the questions.

- 1** What is a theme in the myth?
  - A** Family is important.
  - B** Listen to your parents.
  - C** Jealousy can make you angry.
  - D** Use your power to help, not harm.
  
- 2** What is the relationship between Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo and their three younger brothers?
  - A** They are a happy family.
  - B** They do not agree on things.
  - C** They work together.
  - D** They complain about each other.
  
- 3** This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

**Part A:** Which characteristic of the story best identifies it as a myth?

  - A** The setting is unrealistic.
  - B** The characters are gods and goddesses.
  - C** The characters try to do something brave.
  - D** A narrator tells the story.

**Part B:** Which line from the story best supports the answer to Part A?

  - A** *However, Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo didn't realize their other three brothers wanted to rule the new empire all by themselves. (paragraph 2)*
  - B** *And so, as Inti first intended, only Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo remained. (paragraph 5)*
  - C** *When Inti, the sun god, saw this, he turned Ayar Uchu into stone... (paragraph 4)*
  - D** *He ran off into the forest and was never seen again! (paragraph 4)*

# Characterization and Theme

## Partner Practice

**Directions:** Reread the story “The Wolf and the Heron” with a partner. As you read together this time, take note of how the characters change during the story.

### The Wolf and the Heron

- 1 One day, a wolf got a bone stuck in his throat. It was so painful that he had to find someone to help him to take it out.
- 2 By and by, he met a heron. The heron had a long neck and a long beak. The wolf knew the heron’s beak was the perfect tool to pick out the bone.
- 3 The wolf took the opportunity to ask the willowy, long-necked bird. “Please, beautiful heron,” the wolf said with a voice like honey. “Will you please use your long beak to remove the bone from my throat? It is exactly the instrument to do the job.”
- 4 The heron stopped and thought for a moment. He knew very well that the wolf could be trying to trick him. After all, wolves eat birds like him for dinner. The heron didn’t want to be an easy meal for the wolf.
- 5 “What will you give me if I put my head in your mouth? A swift bite?” the heron asked.
- 6 “I promise I won’t eat you,” croaked the wolf. He scratched at his throat. The bone was becoming more and more uncomfortable. Finally, he said, “I’ll give you a big reward.”
- 7 So, the heron put his head inside the wolf’s mouth, reached his long neck into the back of the wolf’s throat, and gently pulled the bone out.
- 8 “Wow! That is much better!” the wolf said. He took a deep breath and howled with delight. Then, he turned around and went on his way.
- 9 “Hey!” called the heron. “Where’s my reward?”
- 10 The wolf turned around with a grin like a warning. “Oh, you got it,” replied the wolf with a chuckle. “From now on, you can boast to everyone that you put your head inside a wolf’s mouth and lived to tell the tale.”

How is the wolf acting while talking to the heron?



Why does the wolf get away with not truly rewarding the heron?

# Characterization and Theme Partner Practice

**Directions:** Use the text on page 20 to answer the questions.

- 1** Read these sentences from the story.

The wolf turned around with a grin like a warning. "Oh, you got it," replied the wolf with a chuckle. "From now on, you can boast to everyone that you put your head inside a wolf's mouth and lived to tell the tale."

The sentences support the theme of the story by showing that—

- A** helping others leads to big rewards
  - B** it is best to walk away from trouble
  - C** trusting others can be difficult
  - D** making new friends is easy
- 2** Read this sentence from paragraph 5.
- "What will you give me if I put my head in your mouth? A swift bite?" the heron asked.
- What is most likely the reason the heron asks the wolf this question?
- A** To learn what gifts the wolf is offering for saving him
  - B** To show the wolf that he is not a fool
  - C** To get suggestions on how to help the wolf
  - D** To see if the wolf could ask another animal for help
- 3** Which characteristic of the story best identifies it as a fable?
- A** The characters are animals that learn a lesson.
  - B** The setting is unbelievable.
  - C** The characters work together to solve a problem.
  - D** The narrator tells the story.
- 4** Which sentence helps the reader understand that the writer uses a third-person point of view in the story?
- A** *"Will you please use your long beak to remove the bone from my throat? It is exactly the instrument to do the job."* (paragraph 3)
  - B** *"I promise I won't eat you," croaked the wolf.* (paragraph 6)
  - C** *So, the heron put his head inside the wolf's mouth, reached his long neck into the back of the wolf's throat, and gently pulled the bone out.* (paragraph 7)
  - D** *"From now on, you can boast to everyone that you put your head inside a wolf's mouth and lived to tell the tale."* (paragraph 10)

# Characterization and Theme

## Independent Practice

**Directions:** Read the story “Maui Goes Fishing” independently. As you read, practice the steps from the Notice When Characters Change section on page 18.

### Maui Goes Fishing

- 1 “Please let me come with you,” begged Maui, but his older brothers just laughed at him and teased him. “One day, little boy, but not today. There isn’t enough room in our canoe for you.”
- 2 But Maui had a secret. He had magic powers that his family didn’t know about. When he was a baby, he had been given an enchanted jawbone by the ocean spirits. He hid it in a secret box. He took out the jawbone and used it to make a fishing hook. Then, he climbed into a basket at the bottom of the canoe.
- 3 While they were far out at sea fishing, one of the brothers grabbed the basket to put a fish in—and uncovered Maui. “Little squirt!” he said. “We’re taking you back to shore right now!” The brothers took up their paddles again, but Maui wished on his magic fishhook that the seashore would look farther and farther away. After 10 minutes of paddling, the brothers were so tired, they gave up.
- 4 “Keep out of our way, pipsqueak,” they grumbled, and the brothers cast their fishing lines into the sea. Maui stayed down at the bottom end of the canoe, hoping that his brothers wouldn’t see what he was up to. He quietly dropped the magic fishhook over the edge of the boat. Suddenly, Maui felt a powerful tug on his line.
- 5 “Brothers! Quick, help me!” he cried, gripping his fishing line tightly. The four brothers heaved and tugged on the line with all their might. To their great surprise, a hunk of land surfaced before them. It was shaped like a fish. Maui had caught New Zealand’s North Island! Maui was worried that the ocean spirits would be angry with him for catching the island. He dove into the sea to ask for their forgiveness.
- 6 While Maui was under water, his greedy brothers started to hack and chop at the fish-shaped land, trying to claim little bits of it for themselves. This is why New Zealand’s North Island is so craggy and mountainous.
- 7 After performing the miracle of catching North Island, Maui became famous among the Maori people. He grew up to be a much-loved personality. And to this day, the North Island of New Zealand is also known as Te Ika A Maui—or Maui’s Fish.



# Characterization and Theme

## Independent Practice

**Directions:** Use the text on page 26 to answer the questions.

- 1** Read these sentences from the story.

The brothers took up their paddles again, but Maui wished on his magic fishhook that the seashore would look farther and farther away. After 10 minutes of paddling, the brothers were so tired, they gave up.

The sentences support the theme of the story by showing that—

- A** even the smallest have their own strengths
  - B** hobbies make life more fulfilling
  - C** being dishonest can get you in trouble
  - D** secrets can cause problems for everyone
- 2** Based on the events throughout the story, which statement best describes how Maui feels about his brothers?
- A** He is hurt by the cruel behavior.
  - B** He is eager to spend time with them.
  - C** He is proud of their fishing skills.
  - D** He is bothered by their selfish actions.
- 3** Which characteristic of the story best identifies it as a legend?
- A** The narrator explains the events.
  - B** The setting is a real place.
  - C** The main character is mistreated.
  - D** The events are believable.
- 4** Read the question carefully. Then, answer the question on the lines provided. What does the use of third-person point of view help the reader understand in the story? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

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