

Answer Key: Theme and Summary in a Short Story

Grade: 5 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **For teacher use only** RLA

How to use this key

Answers are grouped by section and question number. Many items are open-ended; accept any response that shows correct thinking and uses the story, even if the wording differs. Notes flag where more than one answer works and list common misconceptions. Paragraph numbers below refer to the bracketed markers [1]–[5] in the story. Estimated grading time: ~4–6 min per packet.

Start Notice & Predict grade for effort · ~1 min

1 Notice / predict from the title "The Seed Jar."

Full credit for any reasonable notice + prediction. Examples — Notice: "the title names a jar with seeds." Predict: "someone plants a seed and watches it grow," or "the story is about growing a plant." Any on-topic prediction is fine.

2 Name one lesson from a book/show/real life.

Accept any reasonable lesson stated as an idea about life (e.g., "sharing feels good," "keep trying," "be kind"). If a student writes only a topic word (e.g., "waiting"), give effort credit but note it — Q8 asks for a full theme sentence.

Build Read the Story ~1 min

3 How does Rosa feel about waiting? (paragraph [1])

From **paragraph [1]**: "Rosa did not like waiting"; she frowned; "patient was not a word Rosa liked." **Ideal:** Rosa does not like waiting / is impatient. Accept any answer naming that she dislikes waiting, with a detail from paragraph [1].

Apply Read Closely ~2 min

4 Beginning / middle / end.

Beginning (paragraph [1]–[2]): Grandpa gives Rosa a seed and a pot; she plants a bean but hates waiting and feels gloomy when nothing grows.

Middle (paragraph [3]–[4]): Grandpa says the seed is working under the dirt; Rosa keeps watering even when she wants to quit; on day six a green sprout appears.

End (paragraph [5]): The plant grows tall; Rosa feels proud and learns she can wait for good things to grow. Accept short, correct versions in the student's own words. It is fine if wording is simple.

5 Feelings change (before / after with detail).

Beginning (paragraph [1]–[2]): Rosa feels impatient / gloomy — she frowns, "did not like waiting," almost throws the pot away.

End (paragraph [5]): Rosa feels proud and patient — she shows the plant to Grandpa, says "You were right," and knows she can wait for good things.

Full credit if a beginning feeling + an ending feeling are each supported by a detail and a paragraph number.

6 Theme / lesson (full sentence).

Accept any clear theme sentence about patience or not giving up, such as: "Good things take time and are worth the wait," "Being patient pays off," or "If you keep trying, things can grow." Reject a single topic word (e.g., "patience") as the full answer — note it and connect it to Q8.

7 Best detail that shows the theme.

7a — B. "She kept watering the pot every day. Some days she wanted to quit." This shows Rosa being patient and not giving up, which is the lesson.

Why the others are weaker: **A** shows her impatience at the start (before she changes); **C** is just what she sees; **D** only sets up the story. Only **B** shows the patience the theme is about.

7b: Accept any sentence explaining that choice B shows Rosa kept waiting / did not give up, which is the lesson of the story.

Explain Theme & Summary (Q8) ~2 min

8 One-sentence theme + a 3–4 sentence summary using details.

Acceptable theme statements (any one, or similar, as a full sentence):

- "Good things take time and are worth waiting for."
- "Being patient pays off."
- "If you keep trying and don't give up, things can grow."

Model summary (3–4 sentences): "Grandpa gives Rosa a seed and a pot, but she does not like waiting. When nothing grows at first, she almost gives up, but she keeps watering it. On the sixth day a tiny sprout appears, and the plant grows tall. By the end, Rosa feels proud and learns that good things take time."

Detail locations to support the summary: Grandpa gives the seed and says "be patient" [1]; nothing grows and Rosa feels gloomy [2]; she keeps watering even when she wants to quit [3]; the sprout appears on day six [4]; the plant grows tall and Rosa feels proud [5].

How they connect: the summary should show that Rosa only sees the plant grow because she waits and keeps trying — which is exactly the theme. Full credit for a defensible theme sentence + a focused 3–4 sentence summary that keeps the main events + a link between them.

Theme & summary scoring rubric (3 points)

Score	Theme (one sentence)	Summary (details)	How they connect
3	Clear lesson stated as a full sentence (not a topic word).	3–4 sentences that keep the main events in order; focused, not a full retell.	Clearly explains how the details show the theme.
2	Theme present but partly a topic or a little off.	Summary mostly right but misses a main event or adds too many small details.	Some correct linkage, but not complete.
1	Only a topic word, or a retell instead of a lesson.	Summary is a full copy of the story, or leaves out most of the events.	Little or no connection made.
0	No theme / incorrect.	No summary.	No connection.

Close ACE ~1 min

Answer: accept any accurate one-sentence lesson in the student's own words (see Q8 list).

Cite: the named paragraph must match the lesson (e.g., paragraph [3] "she kept watering... some days she wanted to quit," or paragraph [4] the sprout appears → patience/not giving up).

Extend: any real time the student waited or kept trying (e.g., learning to ride a bike, waiting for a birthday, practicing a sport). More than one answer is fine.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **Retelling everything vs. a focused summary.** A summary keeps only the main events (Rosa hates waiting → keeps watering → the sprout grows → she feels proud). If a student copies the whole story or lists every small detail, it is a retell, not a summary.
- **Topic vs. theme.** A topic is one word ("waiting," "plants"). A theme is a full sentence that says something about that topic ("Good things take time and are worth the wait"). Push students from "waiting" to a full lesson sentence.
- **Detail that does not match the lesson (Q7, Q8).** A detail must actually show the theme. In Q7, choices A, C, and D do not show Rosa being patient — only B does.
- **Feeling change vs. plant growing.** The plant growing is the event; the real change is inside Rosa — from impatient to patient and proud.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students copy the whole story on Q8, run a 5-minute mini-lesson on trimming a retell down to 3–4 key sentences (beginning → middle → end). If students write topic words instead of theme sentences, model turning "waiting" into "Good things take time." The feelings-change chart (Q5) is a fast check of who can locate and cite a text detail by paragraph.