

Answer Key: Characters and the Lesson of a Story

Grade: 3 **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. Part numbers below refer to the bracketed markers [1]–[5] in the story. Estimated grading time: ~3–5 min per packet.

Start Look & Think grade for effort · ~1 min

1 Guess from the title "The Lost Mitten."

Full credit for any reasonable guess (e.g., "someone loses a mitten," "a kid finds a lost mitten," "a mitten gets found in the snow"). Any on-topic guess is fine.

2 Name one lesson you know.

Accept any reasonable lesson about life stated as an idea (e.g., "be kind," "help others," "share," "keep trying"). Give effort credit; this is a warm-up.

Build Read the Story ~1 min

3 What does Sam find? (part [1])

From **part [1]**: a small red mitten on the sidewalk (that does not belong to him). Accept "a mitten" / "a red mitten."

Apply Read Closely ~2 min

4 Retell: beginning / middle / end.

Beginning (part [1]–[2]): On a chilly morning Sam finds a small red mitten but he is in a hurry and keeps walking.

Middle (part [3]–[4]): Sam remembers losing his own hat, so he goes back, picks up the mitten, and takes it to the office, where Theo is crying with cold hands.

End (part [5]): The mitten is Theo's; Theo is grateful, and Sam feels warm inside and learns that helping feels better than hurrying.

Accept short, correct versions in the student's own words. Simple wording is fine.

5 Main character (feeling word + why, with a detail).

Feeling word (end): warm / glad / happy / proud / kind — any positive word that fits Sam at the end.

Why (detail): from **part [5]** — "Sam felt warm inside," Theo said "Thank you," and Sam thought being a little late was worth it. Full credit for a fitting feeling word plus any supporting detail from the story.

6 The lesson (full sentence).

Accept any clear lesson sentence about helping/kindness, such as: "Helping someone feels better than hurrying," "It is good to help others," or "Being kind makes you feel good." Reject a single topic word (e.g., "helping" or "mittens") as the full answer — note it and connect it to Q8.

7 Which sentence shows the lesson?

B. "He turned around and picked up the mitten." This is the moment Sam chooses to help, which is the lesson. Why the others are weaker: **A** just sets the weather; **C** shows Sam wanting to hurry (before he changes); **D** only sets up the story. Only **B** shows Sam choosing to help.

Explain Write the Lesson (Q8) ~2 min

8 Lesson (one sentence) + a detail + how it shows the lesson.

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

- "Helping someone feels better than hurrying."
- "It is kind to help others, even when you are busy."
- "Doing a good thing for someone makes you feel good inside."

Detail locations that show the lesson: Sam stops and remembers losing his own hat [3]; Sam turns around and picks up the mitten [3]; Sam takes the mitten to the office and Theo smiles [4]; Sam feels warm inside and thinks being late was worth it [5].

How it connects: the detail should show Sam *choosing to help* and then *feeling good* — which is exactly the lesson. Full credit for a defensible lesson sentence + one real detail from the story + a link between them (even simply worded).

Lesson & detail scoring rubric (3 points)

Score	Lesson (one sentence)	Detail (from story)	How it shows the lesson
3	Clear lesson stated as a full sentence (not a topic word).	A real detail from the story that matches the lesson.	Clearly tells how the detail shows the lesson.
2	Lesson present but partly a topic or a little off.	Detail is from the story but a weak match to the lesson.	Some correct linkage, but not complete.
1	Only a topic word, or a retell instead of a lesson.	Detail is missing or not really from the story.	Little or no connection made.
0	No lesson / incorrect.	No detail.	No connection.

Close ACE ~1 min

ACE Answer / Cite / Extend.

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

Cite: the named part must match the lesson (e.g., part [3] Sam turns back to pick up the mitten, or part [4]–[5] Sam returns it to Theo and feels warm inside).

Extend: any real time the student helped someone (e.g., helped a friend, shared a toy, helped a family member). More than one answer is fine.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **Retelling vs. the lesson.** Retelling tells *what happened* (Sam found a mitten and gave it back). The lesson tells *what the story teaches* ("Helping someone feels better than hurrying"). If a student only retells for

Q6/Q8, push them to name the lesson.

- **Topic vs. lesson.** A topic is one word ("mittens," "helping"). A lesson is a full sentence that says something about that topic ("It is kind to help others"). Move students from "helping" to a full lesson sentence.
- **Detail that does not match the lesson (Q7, Q8).** A detail must actually show the lesson. In Q7, sentences A, C, and D do not show Sam choosing to help — only B does.
- **Event vs. character change.** Finding the mitten is the event; the real point is Sam *choosing to help* and feeling good about it.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students retell the story on Q6/Q8, run a 5-minute mini-lesson on the difference between "what happened" and "what it teaches." If students write topic words instead of lesson sentences, model turning "helping" into "Helping others feels good." The character item (Q5) is a fast check of who can name a feeling and back it with a detail.

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