

Substitute Guide: Theme and Summary in a Short Story

Grade: 5 **Subject:** Reading / Language Arts **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension RLA

5-minute guide (plain language)

Students read a short original story, "The Seed Jar," then find its **theme** (the lesson), notice how the main character's **feelings change**, and write a short **summary** using details. **You do not need a reading background to run this.** Everything — including the whole story — is printed in the student packet, and every question can be answered right from the story. **This packet is read-aloud friendly:** you may read the story or any question out loud to one student or the whole class at any time.

Standards alignment

Framework: 19 TAC §110.7 (Grade 5 English Language Arts and Reading).

- **Theme:** infer the theme or lesson of a literary text and support it with evidence.
- **Summary:** summarize a text so the main events keep their meaning and order.
- **Text detail:** use specific details from the text to support answers.

Provisional — pending educator verification against the current official TAC source.

(Standards are paraphrased here, not quoted. Please confirm codes and wording against your official source.)

Setup Before class (5 min)

- Hand out one **student packet** per student.
- Make sure each student has a **pencil**. No devices or other materials are needed.
- Write the date on the board and remind students to fill in the name line.
- Keep the **answer key** with you — it is a separate file and is **not** in the student packet.

Materials What's needed

- Printed student packet per student.
- Pencil per student.
- This guide and the separate answer key (teacher only).
- No technology, no special materials.

Timing Suggested pacing (~45–60 min)

Segment	Time	What students do
Start — Notice & Predict	5 min	Q1–Q2 warm-up
Build — Read the story	10 min	Read "The Seed Jar," word bank; Q3
Apply — Read closely	15 min	Q4–Q7 (sequence, feelings change, theme, best detail)

Segment	Time	What students do
Explain — Theme & summary	10 min	Q8 theme sentence + 3–4 sentence summary
Close — ACE	5 min	Answer / Cite / Extend
Continue — early finishers	optional ~15 min	Draw and caption a favorite moment

Script Read aloud to start

"Today's activity is a reading and writing task called *Theme and Summary in a Short Story*. You will work by yourself with just a pencil — no computers. First read the short story called *The Seed Jar*. Every answer is in the story, so if you're unsure, go back and read it again. Answer the questions in order; if one is tricky, skip it and come back. You may read the story quietly out loud to yourself. Put your name, class, and date at the top now. You have about 45 minutes. Raise your hand if you want a word or a question read to you — I am happy to read any part aloud."

Reading the story aloud to the whole class first is a great option for Grade 5. It levels the reading load so every student can focus on the thinking.

Support When students ask for help

- **You may read any part aloud** — the story or any question — to a student or the class, at any time.
- If they are stuck, point them to the **paragraph numbers** [1]–[5]; every answer is in the story.
- Remind them a **theme** is a **lesson** written as a full sentence, not one word.
- Remind them a **summary** tells only the **most important** parts, not every little detail.
- Point to the printed **sentence starters** and the **word bank** for Q8 and ACE.
- Do **not** give answers; prompt with "Which paragraph shows that?" or "How does Rosa feel at the end?"

Access Accommodations & language support

- **Read-aloud** of the story or any question is allowed for all students.
- Point students to the **sentence starters** and the **word bank** (kid-friendly meanings provided).
- Extended time is fine; the core can stop after Q8 if time runs short.
- Students may answer in short phrases if writing full sentences is a barrier, as long as the idea is clear.
- The packet is grayscale-safe — it prints and reads clearly in black and white.

Tools Allowed & not allowed

Allowed: pencil, the printed packet, quiet self-read-aloud. **Not needed / not allowed:** phones, computers, outside sources (everything is in the story).

Collect at the end: Collect every packet, whether finished or not, with names on them. Stack them for the teacher. Note on a sticky how far most students got and any questions that caused confusion.

Answer key: The **answer key is a separate file** (answerkey.html) and is for the teacher only. Please do not hand it to students.

Teacher follow-up (for the returning teacher)

Watch for two common mix-ups: *retelling everything* vs. *a focused summary* (students copy the whole story instead of the main parts) and *topic* vs. *theme* (writing "waiting" instead of a full-sentence lesson). A quick next-day mini-lesson turning topic words into theme sentences, and trimming a long retell down to 3–4 key sentences,

would reinforce this well. The feelings-change item (Q5) and the best-detail item (Q7) quickly show who can locate and use a text detail.

G05_RLA_ThemeSummary_01 — Theme and Summary in a Short Story Substitute Guide