

Substitute Guide: Theme and Author's Craft

Course: English II (Grades 9–12) **Subject:** English Language Arts & Reading **Time:** ~50-min period or ~90-min block RLA

5-minute guide (plain language)

Students read an original short story, "The Lantern Keeper," about a woman who has kept a promise to her late grandmother by lighting a lamp every night. They **trace how the theme develops, analyze the main character's change** with text evidence, **identify the author's craft element** (symbolism — the lantern/light) and its effect, choose the line that is the **best evidence for the theme**, and then write a short **analytical response** (Claim = theme, Evidence = text, Reasoning). On a block period, they add a paragraph analyzing how the symbol shapes the theme. **You do not need an English background to run this.** Everything students need — the whole story and the definition of every term — is printed in their packet, and every question can be answered directly from that story. Hand out the packet, read the opening script, let students work independently in pencil, help by reading aloud and pointing to paragraph numbers (never by giving answers), and collect every packet at the end. The answer key is a separate file for the teacher only.

Standards alignment

Framework: 19 TAC §110.37 (English II).

- **Theme:** analyze how themes are developed across a literary text through characters and details.
- **Characterization:** analyze how a character's qualities and changes advance the plot and reveal meaning.
- **Author's craft:** analyze how an author's use of craft, such as symbolism, tone, or structure, contributes to meaning.

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)

- Count and hand out one **student packet** per student.
- Confirm 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.
- Check the plan: is this a **standard ~50-minute period** or a **~90-minute block**? (Pacing for both is below.)

Materials What's needed

- Printed student packet (5–6 pages) per student.
- Pencil per student.
- This guide and the separate answer key (teacher only).
- No technology, no calculator, no special materials.

Timing Standard period vs. block

On a ~**50-minute period**, do Q1–Q8 and ACE (skip Q9). On a ~**90-minute block**, add Q9 (analyze the symbol's effect on the theme) and allow deeper work on Q4–Q8.

Segment	~50-min period	~90-min block	What students do
Start — Predict & warm up	5 min	7 min	Q1–Q2 (predict from title + term match)
Build — Read the story	12 min	15 min	Read the story, word bank; Q3
Apply — Analyze the story	18 min	28 min	Q4–Q7 (trace theme, characterization, symbol + effect, best-evidence choice)
Explain — Analytical response	10 min	18 min	Q8 C-E-R response on theme
Explain (block) — Craft analysis	—	10 min	Q9 analyze how the symbol shapes the theme
Close — ACE	5 min	7 min	Articulate / Connect / Extend
Continue — early finishers	optional	optional	Rewrite a moment from the girl's point of view

Script Read aloud to start

"Today's assignment is a reading and analysis activity called *Theme and Author's Craft*. You will work by yourself with just a pencil — no computers. First read the short story *The Lantern Keeper*, about a woman who has kept a promise to her late grandmother by lighting a lamp every night. Your job is to figure out the story's **theme** — its message about life — to show how the main character **changes**, to explain how the author uses the **lantern as a symbol**, and then to prove the theme with evidence from the story. Every question can be answered from the story, so if you're unsure, go back and reread. Answer the questions in order; if one is tricky, skip it and come back. Write in complete sentences where it asks you to explain, and always name the paragraph you're using. You may quietly read the story aloud to yourself. Put your name, class period, and date at the top now. [On a block: You'll also add a paragraph analyzing the symbol in Question 9.] Raise your hand if you need a word read to you or explained."

Support When students ask for help

- **You may read any part aloud** — the story or any question — to a student or the class.
- If they are stuck, point them to the **paragraph numbers** [1]–[9]; every answer is in the story.
- Remind them: a **theme** is the message about life (not just the topic); **characterization** = how the character is shown and how she changes; **symbolism** = an object standing for a bigger idea (all defined in the packet word bank).
- For "trace the theme" (Q4), prompt: "What does the light mean to Nadia at the start? What does she realize after the girl comes? What has changed?"
- For Q8, remind them to **analyze, not summarize** — state the theme, then prove it with details, don't just retell the plot. Encourage the printed **sentence stems**.
- Do **not** give answers; prompt with "Which paragraph shows that?" or "What does the light stand for there?"
- It is fine if a student cannot finish the optional early-finisher task, or Q9 on a short period.

Access Accommodations & language support

- **Read-aloud** of the story or any question is allowed for all students.
- Point students to the **sentence stems** and the **word bank** (definitions provided for all five terms).

- Extended time is fine; the core can stop after Q8 if time runs short.
- Students may answer in phrases if writing full sentences is a barrier, as long as the idea is clear and cites a paragraph.
- 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, whether it was a period or a block, 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 patterns: students *naming a topic instead of a theme* on Q4 and Q8 (writing "grief" or "lighthouses" rather than a full statement about life) and *summary instead of analysis* on Q8 (retelling the plot rather than proving the theme with details). A quick next-day mini-lesson contrasting a topic ("promises") with a theme sentence ("keeping a promise can trap us until we understand what it was really for"), plus sorting a few lines by what the lantern symbolizes, would reinforce this well. Q4 and Q5 show who can trace theme and track a dynamic character; Q6 shows who can read a symbol and its effect; the Q8 response — and the Q9 craft paragraph on block days — show who can state a theme and defend it with evidence and reasoning.

HS_ENG2_ThemeCraft_01 — Theme and Author's Craft in Fiction Substitute Guide