

## Interpretation Book Clubs: Analyzing Themes

### Grade 5, Fiction, Unit 1

#### Postassessment Sample Responses

Following are sample responses for each question, at a range of levels. These samples will help students notice if they have done similar work in their responses, and thus will be a helpful part of their self-assessment. These can also serve as mentor texts to help your students to identify specific ways they can lift their work to the next level.

Question	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
<p>1. Reread the passage, lines 11–14. How is this part of the story important to the whole story?</p>	<p>This part shows the problem of the story. Sofia felt embarrassed because some kids called her names and she didn't have nice white sandwiches like they had. At the end of the story she wasn't embarrassed anymore.</p>	<p>This part shows the problem of the story. It shows that Sofia felt embarrassed because some kids called Mexican American kids beaners, and she didn't have nice white sandwiches like they had.</p> <p>Later though, when the coach traded her white sandwich for Sofia's taco and liked it, Sofia didn't feel embarrassed anymore.</p>	<p>This part shows the problem that ends up getting resolved in this story, and it supports the theme. It shows that Sofia is embarrassed at first because some kids call Mexican American kids like her "beaners." Other kids brought "nice white sandwiches" for lunch, and Sofia didn't want to stick out like a "big stupid sign." So Sofia hid her lunch. This shows that she was embarrassed about her culture.</p> <p>But later, when the coach asked Sofia to eat with her and to trade lunches, Sofia realized that she didn't even like "nice white sandwiches" and she didn't have to hide her lunch anymore. That part supports the theme that people should be proud of who they are.</p>	<p>This part shows the problem that ends up getting resolved in this story, and it supports the theme. It shows that Sofia was embarrassed at first because some kids called Mexican American kids like her "beaners." Other kids brought "nice white sandwiches" for lunch, and Sofia didn't want to stick out like a "big stupid sign." So Sofia hid her lunch. This shows that she was embarrassed about her culture. The tacos are a symbol for Sofia's culture, which she was trying to hide.</p> <p>But later, when the coach asked Sofia to eat with her and to trade lunches, Sofia realized that she didn't even like "nice white sandwiches" and she didn't have to hide her lunch anymore. That part supports the theme that people should be proud of who they are.</p>
<p><i>Analyzing Parts of a Story in Relation to the Whole</i></p>	<p><i>Responses at this level tend to name a story element (problem/solution/setting/character/theme) that was featured in a particular part in the story (in this case, "the problem"). Students also mention how that particular part of the story fits into the rest of the story, without elaborating on anything about the rest of the story.</i></p>	<p><i>Responses at this level discuss how a particular part affects or is affected by other parts of the story. Students identify the story element that is featured in the excerpt and also include specific details from other parts of the story, often to explain a decision or a change.</i></p>	<p><i>Responses at this level use literary language to explain how a particular part of the story is important to the whole story. In addition to discussing the story element(s) featured in this part, students may also discuss how this part supports a larger idea or theme in the text. Fifth-grade responses may also consider the author's word choice or craft techniques, and often quote the text.</i></p>	<p><i>Responses at this level are similar to ones at level 5. Level 6 responses are likely to focus especially on literary language, even when the question does not specifically ask for that. This response refers to the symbolic nature of the tacos, but responses can also focus on other literary devices.</i></p>

Question	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
<p>2. The author could have just written that Coach Clarke was trying to help Sofia. Instead, she wrote all about how they shared lunches and talked in the cafeteria. Why do you think the author might have decided to write the story in this way? Think about what you know about author's craft techniques and goals to support your response.</p> <p><i>Analyzing Author's Craft</i></p>	<p>The author gave lots of details about how the coach helped Sofia. This shows readers that the coach did a lot of things to make Sofia feel better.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level note which choices the author makes and why the author wrote that way (because . . .). These responses may also include why the author's choice is important to the story.</i></p>	<p>The author gave lots of details about how Coach Clarke helped Sofia. The author used quotes, putting what the coach actually said in her exact words. The author's goal was to stretch out that part of the story to make it important. Readers can really picture all the ways the coach made Sofia feel better about her lunch.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level name one or more craft techniques used by the author, as well as the goals the author is trying to achieve. That is, there is an effort to explain the significance of the craft choice.</i></p>	<p>The author gave lots of details about how Coach Clarke helped Sofia. She didn't just race past this part, but instead she stretched it out to make it an important part of the story. The author used dialogue and small actions to help readers picture the way Coach Clarke made Sofia feel better about her lunch and her culture. For example, the coach "smacked her lips and made loud 'mmmmm' sounds" when she ate the taco. The author also didn't just <i>tell</i> that Sofia felt better, she <i>showed</i> this by having Sofia start to talk about her family.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level use literary language to name a couple of craft techniques the author uses across the story and his or her reasons for using them. Students may consider how the text would have been different if the author had made different craft choices. That is, there's an understanding that the choices were deliberate ones with important effects.</i></p>	<p>The author gave lots of details about how Coach Clarke helped Sofia. She didn't just race past this part, but instead she stretched it out to make it an important part of the story. The author used dialogue and small actions to help readers picture the way the coach made Sofia feel better about her lunch and her culture. For example, Coach Clarke "smacked her lips and made loud 'mmmmm' sounds" when she ate the taco.</p> <p>The author didn't just <i>tell</i> how the Coach acted or that Sofia felt better. She <i>showed</i> this. She showed that Sofia felt better by having Sofia tell stories about her life. Her stories also show that Sofia's family thought she had a "gift for kicking like a mule." That detail shows that the strong side of Sofia was coming out.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level continue to use literary language to name various craft techniques the author uses and to explain the author's specific goals in using these. Students at this level can discuss the author's treatment of character, setting, and problem as well as the impact of the author's craft choices and language on the story's tone or mood.</i></p>

Question	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
<p>3. What themes are especially important in the story "Taco Head"? Provide evidence to support your ideas.</p> <p><i>Determining Themes/Cohesion</i></p>	<p>Sofia learned she didn't have to be embarrassed about her food or about being Mexican. The coach LOVED her taco.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level name a life lesson that a character in the story learns, most often at the end. Students tend to retell a part of the story that shows this lesson.</i></p>	<p>One theme in this story is that it's okay to be different. At the beginning of the story, Sofia didn't want to eat a lunch that was different. She tried to hide her tacos. But at the end of the story, she ate her tacos in the middle of the cafeteria. She wasn't embarrassed anymore.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level explore one theme across the story. Students are not yet able to name multiple themes that emerge in a story, but can explain how one theme emerges in more than one part of the text. Some students may do this by showing the absence of the theme at the start of the story, and the presence of it by the end, while other students may cite a couple of examples of the theme developing across the story.</i></p>	<p>One theme in this story is that it's okay to be different. At the beginning of the story, Sofia was embarrassed about her lunch and her culture. She thought of other kids' sandwiches as "nice, white sandwiches." She ate her tacos in the bathroom, because she was embarrassed that her tacos were different. But at the end of the story, she ate her tacos right in the middle of the cafeteria and wasn't embarrassed.</p> <p>Another theme in this story is that little acts of kindness can make a big difference. The coach didn't do that much—she just made "mmmmm" sounds as she ate the taco. She listened to Sofia. The coach didn't do some BIG thing. This shows that just being nice to a person who feels left out can make a HUGE difference.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level name more than one theme that the story develops. Students can explain how parts of the text develop each theme and will reference specific details or quote the text. If asked, they can discuss the techniques that the author uses to highlight at least one of the themes.</i></p>	<p>This story teaches readers many lessons. One theme is that it is okay to be different. At the start of the story, Sofia thought of other kids' sandwiches as "nice, white sandwiches" and was embarrassed about her tacos. Later that changed and she ate her tacos right in the middle of the cafeteria. The tacos are a symbol for her culture and she learned not to be ashamed of them.</p> <p>The theme that little acts of kindness can make a big difference is just as important as the other theme. The coach didn't do a huge thing, she just said "mmmmm" when she ate Sofia's taco. She was being very dramatic about how great the taco was because she was trying to show that Sofia's whole culture was great. Sofia started telling stories about her family. The difference in Sofia from the start of the story when she hid in the bathroom to the end shows that just being nice to a person can make a HUGE difference.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level address more than one theme developed in the story and will detail how parts of the text support each one. Students can weigh which themes are most strongly supported across the story and may write about literary devices, such as symbolism, that support the themes.</i></p>

Question	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
<p>4. "Taco Head" and the video clip explore a similar theme/life lesson. Compare and contrast a theme that is developed in both stories.</p> <p><i>Comparing and Contrasting Story Elements and Themes</i></p>	<p>In both "Taco Head" and the video, people helped. That's how the stories were the same.</p> <p>But what happened was different. In the story, the coach helped Sofia not be embarrassed about her taco lunch. In the video, basketball players helped D, who was being teased because she had Down Syndrome.</p> <p><i>Usually when third-graders are asked to compare and contrast it's about something concrete, like the setting. If a student in fourth or fifth grade is asked to compare themes between two stories and the student does so in a third-grade fashion, he or she is apt not to talk about theme, but instead to compare something more concrete. In this instance, the response compares the topic of the two texts. Another response might compare the characters.</i></p>	<p>Both "Taco Head" and the video taught the lesson that it is important to help people who are in trouble.</p> <p>But the two stories were different in the way this lesson was taught. In "Taco Head," the coach sat with and helped the person in trouble—she shared Sofia's taco lunch with her. But in the video, the basketball players didn't sit with D to help—instead they went after the bullies who were making fun of her.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level identify a similar theme and explain the similarities and differences in how it is developed.</i></p>	<p>Both "Taco Head" and the video developed the theme that it is important to help people who are in trouble.</p> <p>But the two stories were different in the way this lesson was taught. In "Taco Head," the coach sat with and helped the person in trouble—she shared Sofia's taco lunch with her. But in the video, the basketball players didn't sit with D to help—instead they went after the bullies who were making fun of her.</p> <p>In "Taco Head" the author developed her theme by using sandwiches as a symbol. When Sophia felt bad about herself, she thought about the sandwiches the other kids ate as "nice white sandwiches." But after she got help, she thought about the sandwiches as "awful, something between sardines and bologna."</p> <p>In the video, the author developed the theme by using a lot of other characters. It wasn't just D who felt better about herself at the end. Her family did too. They felt "awesome" about D getting help.</p> <p><i>Responses at this level identify a shared theme and explain the similarities and differences in how it is developed. To do this, students discuss craft techniques each author uses to develop the theme.</i></p>	<p>Both "Taco Head" and the video developed the theme that it is important to help people who are in trouble.</p> <p>But the two stories were different in the way this lesson was taught. In the story, the coach sat with and helped the person in trouble—she shared Sofia's taco lunch with her. But in the video, the basketball players didn't sit with D to help—instead they went after the bullies who were making fun of her.</p> <p>In "Taco Head" the author developed her theme by using the sandwiches as a symbol. When Sophia felt bad about herself, she thought about the sandwiches the other kids ate as "nice white sandwiches." But after she got help, she thought about the sandwiches as "awful, something between sardines and bologna."</p> <p>In the video, the author developed the theme by using a lot of other characters. It wasn't just D who felt better about herself at the end. Her family did too. They felt "awesome" about D getting help.</p> <p><i>The expectations for sixth grade are different from fifth only if the texts being compared consist of a text that comes in two forms—one visual, and one a written text. That doesn't apply in this instance. So sixth-grade level work will be the same as fifth-grade work.</i></p>