

Quarter 3 - Midterm Study Guide

The literary passages in the English Language Arts (ELA) test are used to identify main ideas and details, cite evidence, make inferences, determine themes, and understand vocabulary.

Key Ideas and Details

- Ideas and details tell you what the story or poem is about.
- Use these ideas and details when writing or speaking about the story or poem.
- Look for central ideas or themes as you read. Ask yourself—what is this about?
- Think about the characters, setting, and events in the story.
- Summarize the important details and ideas after you read.

Structure of the Text

- Make sure you understand the words and phrases as you read.
- Think about how specific words can help you understand the meaning or tone.
- Look at the structure of stories. Pay attention to how the parts of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) work with each other and the story or poem as a whole.
- Think about the point of view or purpose of a text.

Understanding What You Read

- Think about the story and visualize, or make a mental picture, as you read.
- Think about the message or what the writer is trying to say.

The Finish Line

Mother came into my bedroom. With her hands on her hips, she studied the cluttered floor and a wall of built-in bookshelves littered with art projects at every stage except finished.

“What a mess,” she said. “You have projects here that you started in first grade, Maura. Maybe it’s time you finished them.”

She sat on the bed across from me and said, “Your baseball coach called. I know that you quit the team, but what I don’t get is why you didn’t come to your dad and me. We’re not the enemy, Maura, but we can’t help you unless you talk to us.”

I nodded and said, “I know.”

“All right, I better get you to your grandparents or I’m going to be late for my meeting. Downstairs in two, okay?”

I grabbed my sketchbook and headed downstairs, where I discovered that Mother was already outside. After I got in the car, minutes of awkward silence crawled. I wanted to explain why I’d quit the team without telling her, and I wanted her to know what it felt like to ride the bench because you weren’t as good as your teammates. But Mother didn’t understand this, because she had been born good at everything and didn’t realize that most people just weren’t like that. Some people were only talented at drawing.

When I arrived at my grandparents’ farm, Grandpa met me on the porch and said, “How would you like to go on a treasure hunt?”

I was excited for a moment but quickly realized that it was a trick. “You’re not still looking for Grandma’s ring, are you?” I asked suspiciously.

“Just until I find it,” he said, “and you’re part of my search team.”

Suddenly, my summer was not looking so good. I had heard the story a million times: when Grandma was young, her brothers had taken her ring and buried it somewhere on the property. To complicate matters, her parents and grandparents had frequently buried things they wanted to dig up later in fun family treasure hunts—old kitchen items, bottles, and anything else that might be fun to “discover” again—and Grandma’s brothers had followed their example. How were we going to find one ring in all those acres?

I followed Grandpa into the double garage that was his workshop. Tidy shelving, cupboards, and tool benches lined the perimeter. It did not resemble our garage, which was like a huge junk drawer with just enough space carved out for one car. As I admired Grandpa's organization, he retrieved his new metal detector, which looked like a cross between a vacuum cleaner and a weed trimmer.

"You finally bought one!" I said. "We have work to do," he said, nodding.

We took the metal detector to the edge of the pasture, and Grandpa held the contraption out in front of him. Soon it began to hum and shake, indicating that it had found something. I took the shovel and dug while Grandpa searched the upturned soil and fished out a penny. Not quite the payout we were looking for, but it was only our first attempt.

In the first few hours, we only managed to find coins, rusty nails, and an old fork. When I was about to give up, the machine jumped and rattled.

"Maura, get the shovel!" Grandpa commanded.

I dug where he indicated, and my shovel immediately hit something—something a lot bigger than a ring. Grandpa reached into the dirt and retrieved a tin box. Some dirt had gotten through a crack in the lid, but the contents—a handful of tiny metal cars and toy soldiers, a few marbles, and a tarnished hair clip—appeared intact. There was no ring.

"Failed again," I said.

"What a beautiful clip for Grandma's hair," Grandpa marveled.

"Beautiful?!" I exclaimed. "Grandpa, it's disastrously tarnished—it's not even supposed to be that color!"

"A little elbow grease will fix that," he retorted.

We headed back to Grandpa's workshop, where he produced a soft rag and told me to buff the clip back to its original shine. I didn't have much hope until a cluster of tiny crystals emerged. Then we applied some silver polish and buffed it again. When I pulled the cloth away, the clip shone like a new mirror.

Grandpa admired it and said, "Let's show your grandma."

We went inside, where we found Grandma reading, and Grandpa slid the hair clip onto a page of her book.

"Goodness!" she said. "Did you find this with that absurd metal detector?"

"Courtesy of your backyard," I confirmed.

As we admired Grandma's new accessory, someone knocked at the door. I knew it would be my mother. As I headed for the door, I considered the bevy of art projects covering my shelves. They all looked better than that hair clip had, so maybe there was potential for them after all. When we got home, I opened the door to my room. I knew which piece I would work on first.

1. Based on this sentence from the story, what can the reader conclude about Grandpa?

"Just until I find it," he said, "and you're part of my search team."

- A. He is strict.
- B. He is sensitive.
- C. He is organized.
- D. He is determined.

2. What is the MAIN purpose of this paragraph from the story?

I followed Grandpa into the double garage that was his workshop. Tidy shelving, cupboards, and tool benches lined the perimeter. It did not resemble our garage, which was like a huge junk drawer with just enough space carved out for one car.

- A. It teaches Maura the importance of being orderly.
- B. It identifies Grandpa's workshop as the main setting of the story.

Points Awarded - Sample Response

2 In the beginning of the story, Maura does not finish what she starts, but in the end, she understands the rewards that come with completion. When the story starts, Maura's mother points out shelves full of Maura's unfinished art projects (some from first grade). Also, we find out that Maura recently quit the baseball team early in the season. Then, when Maura and her grandpa find an old hair clip, Maura persists in cleaning it until it looks new again. This inspires her to go home and finish a project of her own.

1 By the end of the story, Maura actually finishes a project. She and Grandpa find something that doesn't look valuable but is. She polishes the hair clip until it looks brand-new. She thinks about what else she could finish.

0 Maura quits the baseball team. She has been giving up on at projects since first grade. Her room is messy, and she gets in trouble with her mom.

Points Awarded - Sample Response

4 I followed Mother into the kitchen. Mother asked, "How was your day?"

"Good. Grandpa bought a new metal detector, so we went looking for Grandma's ring again."

"Did you find it?"

"No," I said. "But somehow I think we actually might find the ring this summer. We did find a box of old toys and a tarnished hair clip. Grandpa and I cleaned it up, and it looked brand-new. Grandma was pretty excited when we gave it to her."

Mother pulled some dinner ingredients out of the refrigerator.

"Sounds like you have a new summer plan."

"Yep. When we find that ring, Grandma's going to be so happy."

As I climbed the stairs toward my room, Mother asked what I was doing.

"I'm headed off to finish a drawing," I said.

3 Mother and I went to the kitchen. She asked me about my day, and I told her that Grandpa had bought a metal detector that we'd used to find some old toys and a hair clip.

"We cleaned up that dirty hair clip until it looked brand-new. Grandma was so happy. Next time I go to the farm, I will help Grandpa find her missing ring."

"Sounds like you have a new summer plan."

I ran upstairs to my room to pick out an art project to finish. I imagined how it would look framed on my grandparents' wall.

2 Mother and I went into the kitchen, and she asked me about my day. I told her about my adventures with Grandpa and how we found an old hair clip and made it look brand-new. I told Mother that Grandma loved the clip, but we still had to look for her ring. I told her Grandpa and I would find it next time. I ran upstairs to my room.

1 Me and Mom went to the kitchen. I told her about my day and she was happy that I had finished something. Talked to Dad about quitting baseball.

0 She had went home with her mom.