Fiction refers to stories that are made up. Although the stories may be based on true events, the authors have added elements from their imagination. There are many types of fiction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Fiction</th>
<th>What It’s Like</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>contemporary fiction</td>
<td>takes place in the present day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>historical fiction</td>
<td>takes place in the past; may involve real people or events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>science fiction</td>
<td>about science and technology of the future; may be set on Earth, on a different planet, or in an imaginary place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fable</td>
<td>a story that has a moral or lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>myth</td>
<td>a traditional story from a certain place; may give reasons for how something in nature came to be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every piece of fiction has the following elements, or parts: characters, setting, plot, theme, and point of view.

**Characters**

Characters are people, objects, or animals who participate in a story. Characters have traits and motivations. **Traits** are a character’s qualities, or what he or she is like. Authors reveal a character’s traits through description and a character’s actions, words, and interactions with others. **Motivations** are a character’s goals or what he or she wants. They explain why a character acts or thinks the way he or she does. Read the following passage.

*When Mara heard a knock at the door, she slid an envelope off her desk and hid it in a drawer. When Mr. Tamoko entered, the first thing he said was, “Did I get a letter?” Mara said, “No.”*

The passage suggests that Mara is motivated to keep Mr. Tamoko from finding something out. This motivation is revealed by her actions—hiding the letter and lying about it. In this situation, the traits she shows are secretiveness and dishonesty.
Characters often change over the course of a story. The events and the actions and words of other characters may influence how a character acts, views the world, views himself or herself, or views other characters. Characters who change are called **dynamic** characters. Characters who don’t change are called **static** characters. A character’s actions and feelings throughout a story reveal whether or not he or she has changed. The way a character changes may also reveal the theme.

### Setting

The **setting** is the place where a story unfolds and the time (past, present, or future) when the action takes place. A story may have several settings and move from one place to another or even move backward and forward in time. Descriptive details and the way the characters look and behave reveal the setting. A story’s setting can influence the characters and the theme.

### Plot

The **plot** is the sequence of events that make up the action of the story. It consists of the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The **conflict**—or problem a character or characters must solve—is usually introduced early in the plot. As the story unfolds, the characters’ actions can make the conflict more complicated. Characters can also introduce new conflicts as they respond to each other and react to events. The way characters respond to the conflict and work to resolve it usually hints at the theme of the story.

Authors organize their stories to advance the plot and to keep the reader interested. For example, each chapter of a novel can be an **episode** of the story. Each episode may contain several events, which lead to future events in the story. An author may use a chapter, scene, or even a sentence to add **suspense**, or excitement or tension that makes the reader want to know more. Some authors include flashbacks, or information about past events. **Flashbacks** can create suspense, reveal character motivations, or hint at the theme. Read the following paragraph.

---

Omar could see the car behind him. It had been chasing him for miles now. It was getting closer and closer. At the next intersection, Omar purposely missed the turn for his street and kept driving straight. The police station was only two blocks away. If he could get there in time, he would be safe.

---

How do the events affect Omar’s motivations, decisions, and actions?

Summarizing the plot of a story can help you keep track of the story’s events. When you summarize a story, you tell the central idea and the most important events from the plot, but you leave out the little details. A plot summary is not a review, but a statement of facts. It shouldn’t include your opinions or judgments of the story.

Lesson 1: Fiction

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**Dialogue**

Most stories feature **dialogue**, or conversation between characters. Authors often use dialogue to reveal character motivations and traits. The dialogue between characters shows how they respond to one another and might hint at how they feel about one another. Dialogue advances the plot and can influence events or motivations.

Not all stories have dialogue. For example, a fictional story that is organized like a memoir, set of letters, or journal may not feature dialogue.

**Theme**

The **central idea** is what the story is mainly about. The **theme** of a story is the message about life, human nature, or society that the author wants the reader to understand. Usually, readers have to figure it out using evidence from the story. Paying attention to how characters change, what motivates them, how they interact, and how they resolve the conflict can help you figure out the theme.

---

It's a perfect day. It's sunny and warm, and best of all, there's no school. Ada runs to Leo's room and says, “It’s awesome out. Let’s go to the skate park.”

Leo sits up and says, “Mom said we can only go out if we’re together. And the only place I want to go is the art museum. So, what’s it going to be?”

Ada stalks to her room and slams the door. “I’d rather sit and do nothing than go to an art museum!”

The reader can use these details to determine the theme: When two people refuse to compromise, nobody wins.

**Point of View**

In literature, **point of view** refers to the way the story is told. The **narrator** is the voice that presents the characters, dialogue, plot, and setting to the reader and may comment on what is happening in the story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Person</th>
<th>Third-Person Omniscient</th>
<th>Third-Person Limited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• narrator is a character in the story</td>
<td>• narrator is outside the story</td>
<td>• narrator is outside the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses first-person pronouns</td>
<td>• knows everything about all the characters and events</td>
<td>• knows only one character’s thoughts and feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tells the story from his or her perspective</td>
<td>• uses third-person pronouns</td>
<td>• uses third-person pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reader knows only what the narrator knows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Read each paragraph below. Underline clues that show what type of point of view is used. Then, identify the point of view in each example.

Paulo grumbled as his grandmother patted him on the shoulder. “Wake up, sleepyhead,” she said gently. “It’s a beautiful day to go to the sculpture gardens.”

Paulo turned over and buried his head under his pillow. The sculpture gardens were his grandmother’s absolutely favorite place, but for Paulo, they were about as fun as a trip to the dentist. *Why can’t she understand that I hate the stupid sculpture gardens?* he thought. *Why can’t I spend the day playing soccer with my friends?*

As soon as I woke up, I knew exactly how Paulo and I should spend our day. The sun beamed through my window, like an invitation to enjoy Mother Nature’s beauty. It was a perfect day to visit the sculpture gardens. I knew Paulo enjoyed our trips there as much as I did, and a new exhibit just opened. I couldn’t wait to wake him and tell him about my plans. *He’ll be so excited!* I thought, as I headed down the hall toward his bedroom.

An author chooses a story’s point of view based on his or her storytelling goals.

- If the author wants to concentrate on how and why a character changes, he or she might choose a first-person narrator.
- If the author wants the reader to know about several characters, but see events through only one character’s views, he or she might choose a third-person limited narrator.
- Many authors choose a third-person omniscient narrator to present many characters, events, and settings. This allows the author to present different views on the same event or reveal more than one event at a time.

**Language Spotlight • Context Clues**

Context clues are words or phrases that help you understand the meaning of an unknown word. Context clues include synonyms, antonyms, restatements, examples, and definitions. When you come across an unfamiliar word, look at other words or phrases in the sentence or paragraph for clues. Read the sentences below. Underline words that are clues to the meaning of *remote*.

The house was miles away from the nearest town. It was set in the woods on a carless road that was hard to find. Why did Mr. Barnett move so far away from other people? Why would anyone want to live in such a _______ place?
Read the passage.

Christopher’s Journal

February 20

Sometimes it’s hard to explain to my friends that even though my brother Vincent is four years older than I am, it sometimes seems like I’m way older than he is. My friends really like Vincent—his laugh is contagious and he’s a loyal friend—but at the same time, I know they get exasperated when he asks the same questions over and over or when it takes him a long time to understand something.

Like last week, we were at Trey’s house for a video game tournament, and my team was winning until it was Vincent’s turn. I should have remembered that video games are hard for him. His hands couldn’t keep up with what was happening on the screen, and my team ended up losing. I knew my friends were disappointed.

Or there was the time we tried to play basketball. I could tell that my friends didn’t really want Vincent on their team because he has trouble catching and dribbling the ball. I didn’t want Vincent to get upset, so I sat out with him and cheered from the sidelines. But I wished I could’ve been playing. I love Vincent, and I always include him, but sometimes I wish I didn’t have to take care of him so much.

Tomorrow, Tony and I are going ice-skating at Wilson’s Pond. It’s been a real Vermont winter, and we’ve had a ton of snow. Mom said I have to bring Vincent. And she reminded me to watch out for Vincent—just like she has a million times.

February 21

I can hardly believe what happened this afternoon. Tony and I went to Wilson’s Pond. Vincent came along, but because Mom told him he wasn’t allowed to skate, he just sat on the bench and watched us. Sometimes he falls asleep when he’s bored, but today he was wide awake, which was lucky for me.

I should have been more cautious, but I was so excited to be off on my own skating that I wasn’t paying attention to how the ice felt. When I tried to do a jump sequence, I fell hard. The ice under me cracked open, and I began floundering in the deep, freezing water. Tony was skating at the far end of the pond and didn’t see the accident. There was nobody close by except for Vincent.

I started screaming, “Help!” hoping that Tony would hear me. I started to panic that I was going to freeze to death.
Suddenly, I saw Vincent moving across the ice. I was so relieved I didn’t even think about my mom's warnings or anything else. I saw him slip a few times, but he looked determined. He kept going until he reached me. Then he laid down on the thickest part of the ice and stretched out his arms to me. I gripped them tightly, afraid I would pull him in with me. But Vincent was stronger than I expected. As he held onto my arms, he inched back toward the edge of the pond. By the time he pulled me out of the water, I was soaked and shaking, and my lips were blue, but I was safe.

**February 24**

When I explained to Mom and Dad how Vincent saved my life, they were really impressed. Vincent flashed his famous smile and said it was “no big deal,” but I could tell he was proud of himself. Since then, he has loved telling the story of how he saved his little brother’s life. I always thought of myself as the “big brother,” the one always in charge of Vincent, the one always having to look out for him. But now I know we’re both looking out for each other.

**Answer the following questions.**

1. Underline sentences in the passage that support the idea that Christopher is a dynamic character.

   **Hint** First look for clues at the beginning of the passage that show how Christopher feels about his older brother. Then read the last entry. How does Christopher describe Vincent? How is this description different?

2. Which of the following sentences expresses one possible theme for this passage?

   - **A.** Sometimes you have to find new friends.
   - **B.** Always put your friends first.
   - **C.** Peoples’ abilities can surprise you.
   - **D.** It’s hard for people to change.

   **Hint** The theme is the message that the author wants to share with the reader. Think about the lesson that Christopher learned and how he changed.
This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

Part A
From whose point of view is the story told?
A. from Vincent’s first-person point of view
B. from Christopher’s first-person point of view
C. from a third-person omniscient narrator’s point of view
D. from the point of view of a third-person limited narrator who knows only Vincent’s thoughts

Part B
Which of the following best explains why the author chose this point of view?
A. to show the points of view of all the characters
B. to focus on Christopher’s thoughts and feelings
C. to compare Christopher’s and Vincent’s feelings
D. to show how Christopher and Vincent changed

Hint: Consider whose thoughts and feelings you learn about in this story. What pronouns does the narrator use? How does the point of view affect your view of the characters and events?

Briefly summarize the plot, including the conflict.
Write your response on the lines below.

Hint: Remember that a plot summary includes the most important events and the central idea of a story. It should not include your thoughts or opinions.
A Treacherous Journey

Long ago, a twelve-year-old girl named Gretchen lived with her family on a farm in Switzerland in a remote area far from town and any neighbors. As the oldest child, Gretchen was the most adept at handling the goats on their farm and helping her father plow their land with their hard-working mule, Hans. Gretchen was always busy working with her parents on the daily chores of farm life. She often accompanied her father on trips to the town market where they sold goat butter and cheese they had made and then purchased supplies with their earnings.

When her mother became very ill, a traveling doctor prescribed a special medicine that could be obtained from only a certain apothecary. The doctor gave Gretchen’s father instructions for finding the apothecary, who lived a day’s ride away. Gretchen’s father decided that she would make this journey on their mule because she was the faster rider. Her father stayed to watch over the mother, children, and farm animals. As the doctor left, he warned Gretchen that she must buy the medicine from only this trusted apothecary, Herr Kalt, because only his medicine could save her mother.

“If you can’t get the medicine and return in two days’ time, your mother may not survive,” cautioned the doctor.

Gretchen’s father warned her that there might be obstacles along the way.

“The journey is treacherous, my child,” he said. “You must cross a raging river on a footbridge, which shakes in the wind. Hold tight to the posts as you cross, and don’t look down. As you travel through the woods, keep watch for bears, and if you see one, bang on this iron pot to scare it away.”
All these warnings made Gretchen very nervous, but she tried to hide these feelings from her family because she knew that she was their only hope. Her father helped her pack the mule’s saddlebags with food and water for the journey. Then, she set off down the dirt road. By noon Gretchen and Hans arrived at the river, which roared louder than a waterfall. The water churned its way around huge boulders, and the wind tossed the tiny wooden bridge from side to side.

Gretchen knew that if she didn’t cross this terrifying bridge she had no chance of getting the medicine for her mother. Doing her best to think of nothing but her mother and family, she guided her nervous mule across the bridge—step by step. Finally, they reached the other side and sat down to rest, eat, and drink. Gretchen was tired and wanted to take a nap in the warm sunshine, but she knew she couldn’t rest. She was determined to continue their journey.

Just as they reached the forest, Hans began sniffing the air. Soon, his skinny legs were shaking. Gretchen quickly saw the cause of his distress—a mother bear and her cub emerging from the woods. Gretchen remembered her father’s advice and took her iron pot out of the saddlebag. As hard as she could, she beat it with the metal spoon until the bears turned around and disappeared into the forest.

As the sun began to lower in the sky, Gretchen saw a young man coming toward them on the road.

“Good afternoon, young lady,” he greeted politely. “What brings you to this terribly dangerous road?”

Gretchen told him about the medicine she had to buy and asked if he knew where the apothecary lived. The young man, whose name was Leon, reached into his pocket and pulled out a bottle of dark blue liquid. Leon smiled at Gretchen and offered her the bottle.
“You don’t have to bother walking all the way to Herr Kalt’s house,” Leon said. “It’s quite far from here, and you won’t arrive until midnight. I have some medicine here that is the same as what you would get from Herr Kalt. You can take it and be home early to give your mother this life-saving drink. All I want in return is your mule.”

Gretchen was very tempted to take the bottle. She stared sadly at her beloved mule, and Hans stared sadly back. She didn’t want to give Hans to a stranger, but she could save time and get the medicine to her mother more quickly if she did. But then Gretchen realized that she would have to walk all the way back and it would take her more time without Hans. And how could she forget how much her father needed the mule for plowing? Then another thought occurred to her. Suppose this wasn’t the medicine her mother needed? She remembered that the doctor told her that only Herr Kalt could be trusted. If she took this medicine and it didn’t work, her whole trip would be pointless.

Gretchen refused the offer and mounted her mule. She had to get to the apothecary as soon as possible! Hans trotted down the road, and before long, the travelers reached Herr Kalt’s cottage.

“Well, it certainly didn’t take me until midnight to get here,” Gretchen thought suspiciously.

Herr Kalt presented the medicine in a tin of yellow powder. He told her to mix the yellow powder with water when she got home. Gretchen realized that what she suspected was true. Leon’s blue liquid wasn’t the right medicine at all, and she had been wise to refuse it.

Fortunately, the trip home was uneventful. After taking the medicine, her mother recovered and the whole family congratulated Gretchen for making her perilous journey. Gretchen was proud of herself, too. As her father said, she had shown determination, bravery, and a steady mind and heart on this quest to save her mother’s life.
**Answer the following questions.**

1. How might the passage have been different if it had been narrated in the third-person omniscient point of view?
   - A. It would have had more sentences beginning with the pronoun *I*.
   - B. It would have told more of Gretchen’s thoughts and feelings but no one else’s.
   - C. It might have included other characters’ thoughts in addition to Gretchen’s.
   - D. It would have taken place in the future, not the distant past.

2. Read the sentences on the left. Then match the underlined word in each sentence to its closest definition on the right.

   **A.** As the oldest child, Gretchen was the most adept at handling the goats on their farm. . .
   
   **B.** When her mother became very ill, a traveling doctor prescribed a special medicine that could be obtained from only a certain apothecary.
   
   **C.** “The journey is treacherous, my child,” he said. “You must cross a raging river on a footbridge, which shakes in the wind.”
   
   **D.** As her father said, she had shown determination, bravery, and a steady mind and heart on this quest to save her mother’s life.

   - 1. a long search
   - 2. dangerous
   - 3. a pharmacist who makes medicines
   - 4. courageous
   - 5. able to do something well
Read the following paragraph from the passage.

Gretchen knew that if she didn’t cross this terrifying bridge she had no chance of getting the medicine for her mother. Doing her best to think of nothing but her mother and family, she guided her nervous mule across the bridge—step by step. Finally, they reached the other side and sat down to rest, eat, and drink. Gretchen was tired and wanted to take a nap in the warm sunshine, but she knew she couldn’t rest. She was determined to continue their journey.

What do you know about Gretchen’s character traits and her motivations? Write your response on the lines below. Then underline two sentences in the paragraph that support your response.

This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.

Part A
What message might the author be trying to share with readers in “A Treacherous Journey”? Circle all possible themes that can be supported by the passage.

A. Living in a remote place is good for a family.
B. The easiest way out of a problem is the best.
C. Determination to reach a goal can help you overcome many obstacles.
D. Think carefully about the possible results of your decisions.
E. Pay attention to warnings because they may save your life.
F. Never tell your secrets to anyone, or you might be sorry.

Part B
Underline one of the themes you selected in Part A. Use details from the passage to support your choice.
Describe the main conflict in the passage. How do other story events or characters’ actions complicate the conflict?

Write your response on the lines below.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Reread the scene where Gretchen must decide how to respond to Leon’s offer. Then explain how this scene reveals her traits and motivations, contributes to the development of the plot, and moves the story toward its resolution. Be sure to include evidence from the passage in your response.

Write your response on the lines below.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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