

# Learning from Others

## FOCUS QUESTION

What life lessons can we learn from others?

### NOTICE AND WONDER

Look at the three stories you will read in this lesson. What do you notice? What do you wonder? Discuss your ideas with a partner.

### THINK ABOUT LIFE LESSONS

The characters in these stories learn life lessons from challenges and get advice from others. Have you ever learned a life lesson from a difficult experience or from a helpful person? Write notes and tell a partner about what you learned.

Memory	Lesson Learned

I remember \_\_\_\_.

The lesson I learned was \_\_\_\_.



from *Black Brother,  
Black Brother*

by Jewell Parker Rhodes



from *President  
of the Whole  
Fifth Grade*

by Sherri Winston



*The Trouble  
with Talent*

by Lee Lewis

from

# Black Brother, Black Brother

by Jewell  
Parker Rhodes

**éclair** = a cream-filled  
dessert with chocolate icing

## Stop & Discuss


How is Donte feeling at  
the doughnut shop?

Donte is feeling \_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_.

I can tell because \_\_\_\_.



*Donte Ellison has been having a tough time at school. To feel more confident, he decides to learn fencing. Donte has just lost his first fencing match, or bout. As teammates and families start heading home, his coach gets permission from Donte's parents to take him to a doughnut shop to talk.*

- 1 “Get an old-fashioned. One with sprinkles. What about a chocolate **éclair**?”
- 2 In the pink-and-green shop, smelling of sizzling dough, I get all three. The éclair oozes like mud. Sprinkles look like glittery bugs; even the sugar tastes bitter.
- 3 Drinking black coffee, Coach watches me.
- 4 “Sorry I lost,” I say, eyes cast down.
- 5 “I’m not worried about you, Donte. I’m proud of you.”
- 6 My finger brushes sugar off the old-fashioned.
- 7 “I’m especially proud of how you rallied your team.”
- 8 “Losing is still losing.”
- 9 “Donte, it’s not just about the bout. It’s about leadership, giving respect. Patience and control.”
- 10 I lift my gaze. “You’re not mad?”
- 11 “Of course not. We’re celebrating.”
- 12 “I thought I was in trouble.” 



13 “Not at all.” He leans against the table, his hands folded. “What’d you feel, Donte? When you were fencing?” Coach is urgent, intent like he’s holding his breath until I answer.

14 “It was the best.” I exhale. “The speed, the flick of the **foil**. The rush inside my head.”

15 “You felt alive?”

16 “Yeah. Like being on a huge screen in high-def. Everything clear, crisp. Even so fast, beyond fast. I knew moves before they happened. I can’t explain. Even though I was losing, it felt good.”

17 Coach’s hands smack the table. “I know exactly what you mean. I felt the same way.”

18 “You did?”

19 “I felt unstoppable when I fenced. Today, you reminded me of me. Yet, still without question, you. Watching your focus, your joy, I knew you were born to fence.”

20 Coach’s face is eager, happy. Crazy, he glows. He pats my hand. I feel the warmth, the bond between us.

21 Coach knows what’s in my mind. (I say it anyway.) “I want to fence,” I say, **insistent**. “I want to be the best.”

**foil** = light, flexible sword used in fencing

**insistent** = in an eager, sure way

### Stop & Discuss

**How are Donte and Coach alike?**

Talk with a partner about how they each feel about fencing.





# Determine Theme

- The **theme** of a story is an important message or lesson about life that the author wants to share.
- To help figure out the theme the author is sharing, pay attention to the problems characters face and what they learn from those problems.

## Reread/Think

Reread *Black Brother, Black Brother*. Think about what the characters do, say, think, and feel as they try to solve their problems. Then answer the questions in the chart.

Who are the characters?

What do the characters learn?

What is the problem  
in the story?

What is the theme of the story?






from

# President of the Whole Fifth Grade

by Sherri Winston

*Brianna Justice is running for fifth-grade class president. She is willing to do anything to win. Just the day before, she cheated in a very important election contest and lost. Now, Brianna is at Mrs. Wetzel's bakery, where she has been making cupcakes. Brianna's hero, Miss Delicious, is also there. Miss Delicious is a world-famous baker and millionaire.*

- 1 “Miss Delicious, have you ever done something bad? Like really, really bad? And you wished you could take it back, but you can't? Something so bad that maybe you felt like you didn't deserve to wish for anything good ever again?”
- 2 She and Mrs. W. exchanged looks, then they doubled over with laughter. “If you're asking if we've made mistakes that either one of us wish we could take back, then, *baaaaybeee*, the answer's absolutely, positively, one hundred percent yes!”
- 3 Mrs. W. came around the kitchen work island, still laughing, then straightening and looking more serious. “But if you're asking us how to deal with a mistake, then let's talk it out. We all make mistakes in life, Brianna. How you handle your mistakes is what can **determine** who you really are.” 

**determine** = decide

## Stop & Discuss

**Why do you think Brianna asks Miss Delicious for advice?**

Look for clues in the text and discuss your answer with a partner.



- 4 And that was what I really needed to know. How could I handle my mistakes, and who was I, really?
- 5 After we finished up in the kitchen, we drank coffee and talked.
- 6 Like any smart kid knows, even when you're feeling all close and connected to grown-ups you don't tell them all the dirty details. Hey, too much information would just confuse them.
- 7 But I did talk about my problem at school. My friends had warned me not to get carried away with the election. They had warned me about wanting to win more than I wanted to be a good president. 🚫.....➡

**Stop & Discuss**

What two pieces of advice do Brianna's school friends give her?

Underline both sentences that describe the advice.






**passionate** = having strong feelings and beliefs

**motivated** = hard working, excited to get things done

### Stop & Discuss

What advice does Miss Delicious give Brianna?

Miss Delicious shares with Brianna that \_\_\_\_.

- 8 “Even if you did get carried away,” said Miss Delicious, delicately holding the teacup as she sipped her cream-and-sugared coffee. “Even if that’s true, you’ve learned from it. Making that mistake, getting carried away, heck, that just means you’re **passionate**. So what? It doesn’t mean you wouldn’t make a great president. I think it’s wonderful that you’re so **motivated** and that you’re a young lady with goals and dreams. But keep in mind, you’re a kid. So be a kid. Take your time. Enjoy your life. Play basketball. Hang out with your friends. Don’t be in a rush to grow up. Trust me, you’ll have plenty of time to make your millions!”
- 9 If I was going to be president of the whole fifth grade, I needed to act like a leader now rather than later.
- 10 And with that, I let out a big breath and did my best to start fixing what I’d messed up! 





# Determine Theme

- To find the theme of a story, think about how the characters solve their problems. What do they learn?
- Then think about what readers can learn from the story. What message or lesson can readers apply to real life?

## Reread/Think

Reread *President of the Whole Fifth Grade*. Complete the chart below to figure out the theme of the story.

Who are the characters?

What do the characters learn?

What is the problem  
in the story?

What is the theme of the story?

## Talk

Share your chart with a partner. Discuss the theme of the story. Use text evidence to support your ideas. It is okay to change your mind about the theme as you work together.

I think the theme is \_\_\_\_\_.

The details that show this are \_\_\_\_.

## Write

What is the theme of *President of the Whole Fifth Grade*?  
Use at least two details from the text to support your answer.

[illegible]

## WRITING CHECKLIST

- ☐ I stated the theme.
- ☐ I used text details.
- ☐ I used complete sentences.
- ☐ I used correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.



# The Trouble with Talent

by Lee Lewis

- 1 My heart pounds out a wild drum solo as I near the music teacher's door. What had made me think I could sing in the talent show?
- 2 I had signed up last Wednesday, after eating turkey loaf for lunch. Eating the gray lump was mistake #1. Signing up for the show may have been mistake #2.
- 3 I take a deep breath and open Mrs. Ramirez's door.
- 4 She looks up from her desk and smiles. "Hi, Riley."
- 5 "Can we, um, talk about the talent show?" I ask.
- 6 She pats the chair next to her desk, and I sit. I swallow nervously. Mrs. Ramirez helped me discover I love singing. But she has high **expectations** for her students—like, *really* high—and I don't want to disappoint her.
- 7 "What's on your mind?" she asks.
- 8 "Um, I like singing in your class," I begin, as I feel a river of sweat running down my neck. *Ew*.
- 9 Mrs. Ramirez tilts her head, waiting.
- 10 "But," I mumble, "I don't know if I can sing in front of the whole school." I look down at the floor.
- 11 Mrs. Ramirez is quiet for what seems like minutes. Then she picks up a photo on her desk and hands it to me.

**expectations** = a belief about how good someone can be at doing something





**auditioned** = did a short performance to show off a talent

12 The photo shows an all-girl band wearing leather jackets and spiky boots. The drummer looks like a younger Mrs. Ramirez. “Is that your daughter?” I ask.

13 “That’s *me*!” Mrs. Ramirez laughs.

14 My jaw drops to my feet. “*You* were in a *band*?”

15 Mrs. Ramirez’s eyes twinkle. “I still remember the day I **auditioned**. I was sixteen and absolutely terrified.” She pauses and says, “It’s not easy putting yourself out there.”

16 “No, but you did it,” I say.

17 “Yes, I did,” Mrs. Ramirez nods. “But guess what would’ve happened if I hadn’t taken that chance.”

18 “What?”

19 “Nothing. I’d still be the same old me,” she says.

20 “And you wouldn’t have been in the band.”

21 Mrs. Ramirez smiles. “Exactly.”

22 Mrs. Ramirez is right. If I drop out, nothing bad will happen, but nothing *amazing* will happen, either. I want to do something I love instead of making mistake #3—giving up.

23 “Thanks for the talk, Mrs. Ramirez.” I hand the photo back to her. “Maybe I’m ready to take my chance, too.”





# Respond to Text

## Reread/Think

Reread "The Trouble with Talent." Then choose the best response to each question.

### 1. PART A

What is the theme of the story?

- A. Taking a risk can lead to success.
- B. It can be hard to ask others for help.
- C. To do something well, you have to practice it every day.
- D. As you get older, it becomes easier to perform on stage.

### PART B

Which detail from the text **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- A. "I take a deep breath and open Mrs. Ramirez's door." (paragraph 3)
- B. "The drummer looks like a younger Mrs. Ramirez." (paragraph 12)
- C. "'I still remember the day I auditioned. I was sixteen and absolutely terrified.'" (paragraph 15)
- D. "If I drop out, nothing bad will happen, but nothing *amazing* will happen, either." (paragraph 22)

### 2. Why does Mrs. Ramirez show Riley an old photograph of herself?

- A. to show that everyone has musical talent
- B. to show the importance of trying something new
- C. to show how clothing has changed over time
- D. to show that practice is key to being a good drummer



## Reread/Think

- 3.** Why does Riley want to quit the talent show?

  - A.** He is worried he is not a good singer.
  - B.** He feels there is not enough time to practice.
  - C.** He is scared to sing in front of other students.
  - D.** He promised to play with his band at the same time.
- 4.** What does Riley mean when he says his *heart pounds out a wild drum solo* in paragraph 1?

  - A.** He feels nervous before talking with Mrs. Ramirez.
  - B.** He wants to tell Mrs. Ramirez he feels ill.
  - C.** He is eager to play a song for Mrs. Ramirez.
  - D.** He is playing the drums outside Mrs. Ramirez's door.

## Write

How does Riley change from the beginning of the story to the end? What lesson does he learn, and how does he learn it? Use details from the story in your response.

[illegible]

## WRITING CHECKLIST

- ☐ I described how Riley changes throughout the story.
- ☐ I explained the lesson Riley learns and how he learns it.
- ☐ I used details from the story.
- ☐ I used complete sentences.
- ☐ I used correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.



# Respond to the Focus Question

What life lessons can we learn from others?

## Reread/Think

With your group, decide which story each of you will reread. Reread the story and answer the questions on the lines below.

**TEXT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What lesson does a character learn in this story, and who do they learn it from?  
How can you use this lesson in your own life?**

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## Talk

Talk with your group about the life lessons shared in each story. Take notes below.

It was \_\_\_\_ who shared a life lesson in the story I read. The lesson was \_\_\_\_.

Title	Lessons Learned

## Write

Think about a time you lost a competition that was important to you, made a bad mistake, or were scared to try something. Who helped you and how?