



# **Grade 7 Informational Writing Guide**

## **Student Pages for Print or Projection**

### **SECTION 6: Authentic Writing Tasks**

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (1)

In ancient times, rivers were essential as transportation routes, sources of water, and much more. Write an informational piece about importance of the Indus, the Amazon, and the Nile to early human civilizations.

### PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

### REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
- Use the detail-generating questions to generate vivid, specific details.
- Include anecdotes, quotes, statistics, amazing facts and/or descriptive segments.
- Creatively restate your main ideas in your conclusion.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (2)

Nutrition is essential to good health. Write a report about the importance of a diet that includes protein, fruits and vegetables, and whole grains.

### PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

### REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (3)

Freshwater and saltwater ecosystems are similar in some ways and very different in others. Write an informational piece comparing and contrasting the fish, plants, and microorganisms you would find in these environments.

### PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

### REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (4)

There's a lot of diversity among the native peoples of North America. Choose three tribes and write an essay about their ways of life.

### PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

### REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
- Use the detail-generating questions to generate vivid, specific details.
- Include anecdotes, quotes, statistics, amazing facts and/or descriptive segments.
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENs AND VARIABLES (5)

You're off on a grand tour of Europe. Write an informational text about the countries you'll visit. Don't forget to make a stop in Italy!

### PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #4: \_\_\_\_\_ *etc., as needed*

### REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENs and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
- Use the detail-generating questions to generate vivid, specific details.
- Include anecdotes, quotes, statistics, amazing facts and/or descriptive segments.
- Creatively restate your main ideas in your conclusion.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (6)

Cities are busy, exciting places. Choose a city you'd like to explore and write an informational essay describing the foods you'd eat, the landmarks you'd visit, and the things you would shop for in this urban mecca.

### PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #4: \_\_\_\_\_ *etc., as needed*

### REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
- Use the detail-generating questions to generate vivid, specific details.
- Include anecdotes, quotes, statistics, amazing facts and/or descriptive segments.
- Creatively restate your main ideas in your conclusion.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## ANALYZING PROMPTS FOR GIVENES AND VARIABLES (7)

History is packed with powerful leaders. Pick one and write an informational essay about his or her three greatest achievements.

### PREWRITING FRAMEWORK

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #1: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #2: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIN IDEA #3: \_\_\_\_\_

### REMEMBER

- Use the prewriting framework to plan your piece.
- Refer to the INFORMATIONAL PILLAR to help in writing a well-organized, fully elaborated piece.
- Analyze for GIVENES and VARIABLES.
- Engage in research. Take clear notes.
- Be sure your main idea sentences are broad yet distinct.
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Name \_\_\_\_\_

## The Science Sub

Who didn't like Mr. Renaldo? Our science teacher was fair and funny, and super enthusiastic about his subject. That's probably why we all loved science, even my best friend Dylan who didn't much like school in general. Dylan got in trouble a lot and I think it was because school didn't come easily to him. Instead of looking stupid, which he definitely wasn't, he tried to act like he just didn't care.

"What'd you think Mr. R's got planned for us this morning, Sam?" Dylan asked me as we made our way down the hall toward the science lab.

"An experiment, I hope," I said. With a vocabulary test in language arts and a pop quiz in social studies, it'd been a tough morning and a cool science experiment, preferably featuring something that exploded, would give me a nice break from sitting at a desk thinking until my head ached.

"Me too," said Dylan.

Our hopes were dashed the minute we walked into the science lab. Where was Mr. R? Sitting at his desk was somebody we'd never seen before.

"A sub? "Say it isn't true!" Dylan said, slapping his hand to his forehead

Lisa, Lily and Shannon laughed. "It's true," said Lily. "I wonder what's wrong with Mr. R."

After the rest of the class made their way into the room and took their seats, the substitute teacher introduced herself.

"I am Miss Zigly," she said. "And I'll be..."

"Miss Piggy? Your name is Miss Piggy?" Dylan said with a chuckle. "Awesome."

The sub tried again. "I said Miss Zigly. Z - I - G - L - Y and I'll be filling in for Mr. Renaldo today."

"Zigly? I liked Piggy better," Dylan said. Everybody laughed.

Miss Zigly tried to ignore the laughter and take control of the classroom. "Mr. Renaldo left a video for us to view today and he asked that you take notes while you watch it. First, though, I better take attendance."

Dylan didn't answer when his name was called. Instead, he shouted out "Dylan Ramsey. He's not here today. You're lucky. He's bad news!"

Everybody roared with amusement and Miss Zigly's face flushed bright red.

"Okay, now," she said, firmly. "Please settle down."

Theo Baker dug a magazine out of his backpack and started reading it. Lisa tore open a bag of chips and shared it with Lily and Shannon.

“Does Mr. Renaldo allow you to eat in class?” Miss Zigly asked. He didn’t. None of the teachers did.

“Of course,” Lisa said, passing the bag over to Dylan, who took an overflowing handful and crunched loudly. Salty crumbs fell to the floor.

“Come on now, class,” Miss Zigly pleaded. “Listen up and raise your hand when I call your name.”

By now, most of my classmates were joking around and chatting openly, totally ignoring Miss Zigly. Dylan jumped out of his seat and switched the lights off.

“Power’s out!” he shouted. “Everybody go home.”

There was another loud outburst of laughter, and kids started packing up their things as if they were really going to leave.

Miss Zigly looked like she might cry. “Please! Put the lights back on and sit down! Right now!” she hollered desperately.

Suddenly Katie Thompson, who was usually very quiet in class, stood up and shouted, “Come on! Give her a break.” She blushed when everybody turned and stared at her with astonishment, but at that moment, Katie earned my everlasting respect.

After a minute, I got up and switched the lights back on. “Thank you,” Miss Zigly said, her voice trembling.

“You’re welcome,” I said, taking my seat.

After that, everybody quieted down to watch the video and Miss Zigly gave us some really helpful hints about how to take good notes. When the bell rang, Dylan ran to the custodian’s closet. He came back with a broom and dustpan, and I helped him sweep up all the potato chip crumbs. Miss Zigly seemed grateful.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## A Happy Ending

It was a dreary Monday morning in November and I began my day by getting into an argument over something stupid with my best friend at the bus stop. From there, I went to Language Arts class where I learned that I'd only gotten a C+ on the paper I was sure merited an A. After all, I'd sweated bullets to write it, paragraph by careful paragraph, last Sunday afternoon.

From there, it was onto gym class where we were playing indoor soccer, my least favorite sport. Stephanie Irving, who was good at all things athletic, told me that our team might have a shot at winning if I would just "stay out of her way." Great. You better believe that made me feel good about myself.

I'd forgotten my lunch at home and I just couldn't stomach the cafeteria's odd interpretation of meatloaf, so all I had to eat all day was scraps from my sympathetic friends' lunches. I was starving by 2 o'clock and had to cope with a pop quiz in 8th period math class. I'm sure I flunked.

To top it all off, I had band practice after school and our music teacher singled me out for a scolding in front of everybody.

"Kristin, I can hear that you haven't spent a single minute with your flute this weekend," he yelled. "I've told you a thousand times, you're never going to master your instrument without practice, practice and more practice."

My face was burning with embarrassment. Of course I didn't, but I felt like telling Mr. Musical that it wasn't so easy to find time for practice, practice and more practice.

"No excuses," he'd surely snarl if I started to tell him about my busy weekend -- the household chores, the babysitting jobs, the sleepover at Katie's that I just couldn't miss and Sunday dinner at my grandparents.

The day seemed to be dragging on forever. When band practice was finally finished, I discovered that I'd missed the late bus. I trudged home in the chilly grey of the early evening.

By the time I got there, all I wanted to do was have some dinner and go to bed early. I'd finished all of my homework in study hall, so I was getting ready for bed when the sad, wide-eyed face of my little brother appeared at my bedroom door.

"What's up, Charlie?" I asked. Had the little guy been looking so miserable at dinner? If so, I hadn't noticed.

"I can't remember my spelling words," he said, holding back tears.

"What?"

“Tomorrow’s the spelling test and I don’t know my spelling words.”

“I’m sure you’ll do fine.”

“No, I won’t,” he said in a trembling voice. “Last week, Scott and Max both got 100 on their spelling tests and I got three wrong.”

“So what,” I said irritably. “Spelling tests aren’t the most important thing in the world, Charlie.”

“But I want to get 100,” he cried. Tears spilled out of his big brown eyes and I remembered being in second grade and having trouble with spelling too.

“Let me quiz you,” I said.

So Charlie and I sat down on my bed and I quizzed him on his spelling words until he was sure he knew them by heart. By that time, I could hardly keep my eyes open and neither could he.

“Good night, Charlie,” I said. “You’re going to do great on that test. And, if you don’t, well, at least you know you gave it your best shot.”

Charlie reached over and gave me a big hug. “Thanks for helping me, Kristin,” he said. “I know you didn’t want to, but I really needed your help. You’re so good at spelling.”

“Tell that to my second grade teacher,” I said, laughing.

“Here.” Charlie handed me the tootsie pop Mom had used to entice him to eat his broccoli. This was kind of a big deal. I’d never known a kid who loved candy more.

“You keep it, Charlie,” I said.

“No,” he insisted. “You take it.”

“Thank you,” I said. “It’ll make a great snack tomorrow.”

Wasn’t it funny how a day that started out with a spat could end with something so sweet?

# Student Template

## STORY: THE SCIENCE SUB

Find textual evidence showing how each of the characters below show empathy for Miss Zigly.

DYLAN

SAM

KATIE

## STORY: A HAPPY ENDING

Find textual evidence showing how both the characters below show empathy for each other.

KRISTIN

CHARLIE



## **SENTENCE STARTERS FOR A LITERARY ANALYSIS TASK - FOCUSING ON THEME**

- When Kristin says \_\_\_\_\_ we realize that \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Dylan surprises us when \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Charlie asks \_\_\_\_\_ .
- In my experience \_\_\_\_\_ .
- I felt empathy for \_\_\_\_\_ .
- The theme of the stories \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Another example is when \_\_\_\_\_ .
- If I were in Kristin's situation, I might \_\_\_\_\_ .
- I admire \_\_\_\_\_ .
- In both stories \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Understandably, \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Furthermore, \_\_\_\_\_ .
- When Katie says \_\_\_\_\_, we see that \_\_\_\_\_ .
- In paragraph \_\_\_\_, the author shows us \_\_\_\_\_ .
- This is evidence by \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Sam shows empathy when \_\_\_\_\_ .
- The reader can conclude \_\_\_\_\_ .
- At the beginning of the story \_\_\_\_\_ .
- As the story concludes, \_\_\_\_\_ .

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**READ LIKE AN AUTHOR**

In this excerpt from *Far North* by Will Hobbs, 15-year-old Gabe Rogers, a Texan who has recently arrived in the Northwest Territories of Canada, is flying on a small plane with his boarding school roommate, Raymond Providence, a native of the ancient Dihnay nation, first people of the Northwest Territories. Raymond has dropped out of boarding school when the plane that's bringing him home takes a risky detour to see the spectacular scenery below. Raymond's aged uncle is also in the plane, which is piloted by the youthful Clint.

I tried to relax and quit worrying. In the deep gorge below us, the river we were following wound like a snake, and Clint was all concentration adjusting to the bends. Just let him fly the plane, I told myself. Anyway, the mountainsides off both wingtips gave us no choice but to keep following this canyon upstream – no room to turn around here even if you had to. Hang on and try to think positive, I thought.

We kept following the river canyon's snaking turns until finally we cleared the pass at its headwaters and entered a world of mountains without end, ranges upon ranges, the highest ones wrapped in glaciers and cloud. I was overwhelmed by what I was seeing, thankful after all that Clint had bent the rules for me, or maybe broken them, in order to show me this. IT was all too beautiful, too immense to be believed, and yet it was real. I began to read out loud some of the names Clint had talked about the first day we met: "The Ragged Range, the Sunblood Range, the Sombre Mountains, the Funeral Range, the Headless Range...Hey, Clint, this is a cheerful place!"

"Up here," he replied dramatically, "nature reigns supreme."

"Listen to these! Crash Canyon, Stall Gorge, Death Lake, Hellroaring Creek...So where's that Deadman Valley you had all the stories about?"

"It sits in a break down in the canyons of the South Nahanni. Up ahead here, that's the very headwaters of the South Nahanni you're looking at, right up against the N.W.T.'s border with the Yukon." He reached for the radio. "Now we'll tell 'em where we are," Clint said confidently. "Cessna 6-7-Z-RAY calling Fort Simpson. Fort Simpson, do you read? Do you read me?"

Nothing but more static.

*Taken from Far North by Will Hobbs*  
Avon Books, The Hearst Corporation

© 1996

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## READ LIKE AN AUTHOR

You've read an excerpt from a narrative story. Now read each framing question, below. On the lines beneath each question, turn the key words into a simple response, using evidence from the story.

**Ex. Who is the main character (point of view character or protagonist) in the story?**

The main character in this story, also known as the point of view character or protagonist, is Gabe Rogers.

**Or:**

In this story Gabe Rogers is the main character, also known as the point of view character or the protagonist.

1. Where is the story set? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the tone or mood of the story? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the main character's problem, challenge, or adventure? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What is the main character's motivation (what does the main character want)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Where does the author use suspense and/or foreshadowing? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





6. How does the main character feel about the situation? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. How does the main character show his/her feelings? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. How did the main character grow and change in response to story events?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What figurative language did the author use and why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. What is the theme of the story and how is it demonstrated? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What would you do if faced with a similar challenge or adventure? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## The Ultimate Betrayal

Who could resist the chance to try a sport called Ultimate Frisbee? It wasn't easy, but I did.

Back in September, I was so proud to be the captain of the soccer team and I just knew I could lead our team to the middle school championship. We had some great players, especially my best friend, Kate. Speedy, competitive Kate and I had been playing soccer together since we were little kids. She knew how important soccer was to me and I saw the two of us tearing up the field together like we'd done for so many seasons past. It was going to be great!

It was the first day of school when the big news was announced: Ultimate Frisbee was coming to Madison Middle School!

Ultimate Frisbee? I'd never heard of it.

Kate was all excited. "It's the ultimate sport. You pass a Frisbee from player to player to try and get it in your goal."

"Sounds like soccer," I said, trying to imagine the game. "Instead of kicking a ball into your goal, you throw a Frisbee into it."

Kate shrugged. "It's something new," she said. "And I need a new challenge."

"So you're signing up for the team?"

"Of course," she said.

"Won't it interfere with soccer?" I asked.

"Matt, you know it's one or the other – Ultimate Frisbee or Soccer – not both. And I've decided to give Ultimate Frisbee a shot."

"You're bailing on the soccer team?" I couldn't believe it.

"I'm trying something new," she said. "Maybe you should too."

"Are you mad at me about something?" She certainly sounded like she was.

"No, not at all," she said. "See you at lunch!"

Off she went. We met up in the cafeteria and had lunch together as usual. I started

to think that Kate would change her mind about Ultimate Frisbee. For sure, she'd miss kicking around the soccer ball with all the kids she'd been playing with for years.

But the next day when the soccer team gathered for our first practice on one side of the field, Kate joined the Ultimate Frisbee team on the opposite side. I tried to ignore her and got busy assigning positions, but that's when I discovered just how many soccer players we'd lost to the irresistible new sport. Our goalie and two of our best defensive players had gone over to the other side. Even Jill Bently, our most aggressive forward, had succumbed to the novel lure of Ultimate Frisbee. Still, I held out hope that she, like Kate, would see the light and come back to soccer.

A week later that hope went out like a flashlight with a dead battery. Around school, it was clear that Ultimate Frisbee was cool; soccer was not.

When Kate sat beside me on the bus the next morning, we didn't have much to say to each other and I wondered if I'd ever be able to forgive her for her ultimate betrayal.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Mother Knows Best?

I knew something big was up when Mom walked into the room, switched off the TV and said, “Girls, we’ve got to talk.”

Amy turned questioning eyes to me and I shrugged. I hoped this wasn’t going to be another lecture about putting our dirty dishes in the dishwasher or helping out with the laundry. I knew Mom needed help now that she was working full-time and I was certainly willing to pitch in, but it was so easy to overlook a dirty dish or two, or an overflowing hamper. She had to understand.

“Ella, Amy, just let me tell you, this is the hardest decision I’ve ever had to make,” she said, sounding nervous. “But I don’t know what else to do.”

“What is it, Mom?” I asked.

“Well, you know we’ve been cutting corners for months,” she said, stalling. “Clipping coupons and eating lots of peanut butter and jelly.

“And macaroni and cheese,” Amy said. “Cheap but delicious.”

Mom smiled sadly. “Saving money at the grocery store just hasn’t been enough,” she said with a sigh. “And I know you both wanted to go to camp this summer, but I have only enough money to send one of you.”

Oh no. Ever since Mom and Dad got divorced, we never seemed to have enough money. I’d gotten used to going without popcorn at the movies and shopping for my clothes at end-of-season sales, but this was really bad news. Poor Amy!

My twin sister and I might look alike, but we were very different people. Amy was sweet and funny, once you got to know her. Problem was, getting to know her wasn’t easy because she was shy and awkward around strangers. She was having a really hard time adjusting to our new school and hadn’t made any new friends yet. I knew she was lonely.

I was the exact opposite. To me, moving was a great adventure and I’d made a ton of new friends. One of the reasons I was so eager to go to Camp Sunshine, in fact, was that Julia, one of coolest of my new pals, went there and told me it was awesome.

“There are dances and bonfires at night,” Julia said. “And lots of boys!”

What could I say to that besides, “Sign me up!”

Amy said the same when she heard that there was a pottery wheel at Camp Sunshine. My creative sister loved working with clay and she would definitely enjoy learning how to use a pottery wheel. Still, without me, she’d be overwhelmed with the social whirlwind of camp. So if only one of us could go to camp, surely Mom would see that I was the natural choice. Plus, it had been my idea all along.

“So,” Amy asked, in her gentle voice. “Which one of us gets to go?”

“Well, I’ve given this a lot of thought,” Mom said. “I’ve pondered it for more than one sleepless night and my decision is final. No arguments. No negotiations, promise?”

We both nodded and she continued

“Now I know you’d both have a great time at camp, but...”

She paused. I could tell that this was hard for her, knowing that she was going to have to disappoint Amy.

Then, she dropped her bombshell. “But, I’ve decided to send Amy to camp this summer. Ella, you’ll go next summer.”

Do mothers always know best? At that moment, I doubted it. But a couple of months later when Amy returned from camp with a confident new spring in her step -- and a suitcase full of handcrafted pottery -- I understood that my mom definitely knew what she was doing.

# Student Template

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**MATTIE'S SITUATION:**  
Why does she feel betrayed?

**EVIDENCE OF HER  
FEELINGS:**

**HOW KATE MIGHT FEEL  
ABOUT THE SITUATION?**

**ELLA'S SITUATION:**  
What does she expect to happen?

**EVIDENCE OF HER  
FEELINGS:**

**HOW MIGHT AMY FEEL  
ABOUT THE SITUATION?**

## **SENTENCE STARTERS FOR A LITERARY ANALYSIS TASK - FOCUSING ON POINT OF VIEW**

- Another possibility is that \_\_\_\_\_.
- The narrator's feelings are illustrated though \_\_\_\_\_.
- In paragraph # \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_.
- It is interesting to note that \_\_\_\_\_.
- In contrast \_\_\_\_\_.
- We know how (character's name) feels when \_\_\_\_\_.
- At the end, we discover that \_\_\_\_\_.
- It is easy to imagine how \_\_\_\_\_.
- It is clear that \_\_\_\_\_.
- (Character's name) attitude changes when \_\_\_\_\_.
- We can speculate that \_\_\_\_\_.
- These details suggest \_\_\_\_\_.
- When (character's name) says " \_\_\_\_\_," we realize \_\_\_\_\_.
- At the end, the reader discovers \_\_\_\_\_.
- Most readers will understand why \_\_\_\_\_.
- Both characters seem to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Mattie clearly feels \_\_\_\_\_, but Kate \_\_\_\_\_.
- It would make sense if \_\_\_\_\_.
- Ella is sure that \_\_\_\_\_, but Amy \_\_\_\_\_.
- Consider the possibility that \_\_\_\_\_.