International School of Monterrey

Junior High School **___th Grade**
Trimester ___ **Literature**

Name _____ Date _____ List #: ____-____

Determine the themes of short stories

DIRECTIONS: Read the following stories, then choose the correct option and write it in the space provided.

The Lead Role

Travaris had always loved singing, but he was still stunned when he landed the lead role in the school musical. He could barely wait to tell his parents the news. But when he made his announcement over dinner, they looked at each other and frowned.

"You said the performance was the week of May 13?" his dad asked.

Travaris's heart sank. Of course. His older sister was getting married in Hawaii that week.

"I'm sorry, but you'll just have to tell them that you can't do it," his mom said.

The next day at school, Travaris planned to tell Ms. Phelps, the theater director, that she should give his part to someone else because he wouldn't be in town during the performance. But all day he was bombarded with congratulations from his classmates for getting the lead role. He didn't have the heart to tell them that it was all for nothing because he couldn't even be in the play.

Travaris told his mom that he was staying after school to help out with set design, but really he was reading his lines, singing the songs, learning the dance numbers, and even getting fitted for costumes. It couldn't hurt to enjoy being the star of the play for a little bit, could it?

But as the weeks went by, Travaris started to feel guiltier and guiltier. He knew that the longer he put off dropping out of the play, the more he would hurt the rest of the cast and crew.

Finally, Travaris told Ms. Phelps how he couldn't be in the musical.

Ms. Phelps thanked him for letting her know. "But don't forget to audition again next year," she added with a wink.

_____ 1. Which of the following best describes the main theme or lesson of the story?

A. Not everyone is meant to be a star.
B. Be honest, even when it doesn't benefit you.

_____ 2. Select the quotation from the story that most strongly suggests that the theme is: **Be honest, even when it doesn't benefit you**.

C. *He knew that the longer he put off dropping out of the play, the more he would hurt the rest of the cast and crew.*
D. *He didn't have the heart to tell them that it was all for nothing because he couldn't even be in the play.*

Too Much Fun

Darryl thought his friend Julia had such a cool mother. She would drive Julia and Darryl anywhere they wanted to go: movie theaters, swimming pools, ice cream shops. Darryl's own mother worked in a laboratory all day, doing research. Even on weekends, she buried her nose in science books. Darryl loved the way his mom could explain mysterious things about the universe and always had interesting trivia to share. But sometimes he wished he had a mom who was a little more . . . well, fun.

One Saturday, Julia and her mom picked up Darryl at his house. They were all going to a big amusement park. Darryl said goodbye to his mom, who was reading.

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"Isn't your science project due Monday?" she asked him.
"It's almost done," Darryl said, walking out the door.
At the amusement park, Julia's mom treated them to popcorn and fried dough. They all dared each other to go on the fastest, most dizzying rides in the park. They laughed and screamed all day long. Darryl had a blast.
Darryl woke up with a splitting headache Sunday morning. He groaned at the thought of finishing his science project. He heard his mother making breakfast, the same breakfast she made every Sunday: a vegetable omelet and fresh fruit. Usually Darryl wanted a doughnut for breakfast, but the thought of more junk food made him queasy. His mother's healthy cooking and quiet, studious ways were just what he needed after such a loud and busy day.
After he ate, his mother helped him finish his science project. When Julia called later, asking Darryl if he wanted to come by, he said no. Maybe next weekend he would be ready for more fun, but not now.

_____ 3. Which of the following best describes the main theme or lesson of the story?

E. Work should come before play.

F. *Every* person has something important to offer.

_____ 4. Select the quotation from the story that most strongly suggests that the theme is: **Every person has something important to offer**.

G. *His mother's healthy cooking and quiet, studious ways were just what he needed after such a loud and busy day.*

H. But sometimes he wished he had a mom who was a little more . . . well, fun.

Callie's Gift

Callie opened a letter she got in the mail. It was an invitation from the parents of her friend Michael. They were throwing him a surprise birthday party in a banquet hall at the Helmsley, the most expensive hotel in town. Callie wanted to get Michael the perfect gift. At first, her plan was to make him homemade magnets using cut-outs from the superhero comics they both loved. But that wouldn't work anymore. Obviously, a fancy party called for a fancy present.
One day in class, she saw him checking the time, which gave her an idea. A watch! There were lots of expensive watches. It would be the ideal gift.
Callie went to a jewelry store to pick one out. She swallowed hard when she paid for it. The watch cost nearly all the money she'd saved from her part-time job. Even the glossy paper she wrapped it in cost more than regular paper. However, she was relieved that she had gotten an appropriate gift.
The night of the party, Callie invited some of the other guests to hang out at her house beforehand. It was fun to see everyone in formal attire. But something unexpected happened when people started comparing birthday gifts.
Richard had gotten Michael a squirt gun, the kind they had played with as kids. Molly had made Michael a big card. And Jasmine had baked a batch of Michael's favorite cookies.
Suddenly, Callie imagined Michael as he opened the presents. She could picture his warm smile as he unwrapped the squirt gun, the card, and the cookies. Then she pictured the confused look on his face when he saw the expensive watch. Callie recalled the price she had paid, and she blushed.
Luckily, she still had the receipt. She put the wrapped box in her room before leaving with her friends. Her gift would be late, but at least it would be special.

_____ 5. Which of the following best describes the main theme or lesson of the story?

I. Good manners reveal a lot about a person.

J. *The* most meaningful gifts don't have to cost a lot.

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