

A Common Core State Standards &
Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills-
Aligned Educator's Guide for

MELVIN INVENTS MUSIC



For Grades 4-6

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Synopsis: *In this hilarious novel, Melvin creates a new thing that he calls “music.” Unfortunately, like most great inventions, other people have trouble embracing and accepting this new pastime. As a result, Melvin is sent to a home for wayward children with similar disabilities. While there, Melvin and his new friends discover they can make something almost magical with the different instruments they’ve created. The only problem is getting everyone else to see how wonderful music can be.*

GUIDE CREATED BY
DEBBIE GONZALES



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

“I’ve always been this way. I hear patterns” (p. 11).

- A *pattern* is defined as being a shape, a system, or an orderly arrangement. Discuss what it means to hear patterns using the definition terms as reference.
- Explain why the ability to hear patterns sets Melvin apart from the others.
- Tell why Laila is familiar with the concept of patterns.
- Compare and contrast Laila and Melvin’s idea of patterns. Examine the differences and similarities of each.

“Well, I’m glad you asked, because actually, I have.” Melvin took a deep breath. “I’m going to be a professional musician” (p. 31).

- Discuss why Melvin’s innovative plans for himself were not received well by his parents.
- Examine the humor in this statement. Tell why Melvin’s plans seem both logical and comical to modern day readers.
- Do you agree with Lars’ statement that farmers, weavers, and builders do more important work than a professional musician (p. 32)? Explain your answer.

“That’s why you’re here,” Melvin persisted. “You’re musical. Like me. That’s how you ended up in this place. That’s how we all did” (pg. 53)!

- Rolf, Pieter, Dagmar, Birgit, and Melvin share the same symptoms of having “unhealthy” interests in sounds. Explain why their musical interests were considered to be “noisy and disruptive” to everyday Grimstadian life (p. 55).
- The word *eccentric* is defined as bizarre, unusual, and freakish. Consider the name of the school Melvin and the others are forced to attend – the Shivralt Home for the Hopelessly Eccentric Youth. Evaluate the chances for the students who attend the school to become “cured” if they are considered to be “hopelessly eccentric.”
- Discuss why being “hopelessly eccentric” benefits Gustav.

Melvin didn’t move a muscle. His head told him it’s a bad idea to risk getting thumped by a club for your principle – no matter how noble they are – but his heart told him otherwise. He suddenly felt very protective of his music. It seemed worth cherishing, guarding, making sacrifices for (p. 83).

- Examine the action in this scene. Consider the reasoning behind Melvin’s determination to defend his music. Tell what this determination reveals about his character.
- Identify the reason why Gustav is threatening Melvin in this way.
- The word *principle* is defined as integrity, honor, and sincerity. Discuss how defending his principles reflect these good qualities.



Lars glanced around the room. Something was definitely up. Couples were spinning and whirling everywhere, inventing intricate new steps, gliding to and fro as if on skates. “You don’t suppose it has something to do with those sounds from outside, do you,” he asked as he dipped his wife dramatically (p. 104).

- Discuss the change taking place in Melvin’s parents and other Grimstad community members as a result of hearing music.
- Explain how not knowing where and what the sounds were served to inspire them to dance.
- Describe how this scene explores the power of teamwork.
- Tell why the Hegoumen found the first successful dance in Shivralt’s history to be troublesome (p. 109).
- Investigate how this scene serves to be a critical turning point in the story by identifying how dancing affects the musicians, the community members, and the Hegoumen.

“Because the better you get at music, the more there is to get better at. So in a way, the more you know, the less you know” (p. 113).

- The word *humble* is defined as modest, courteous, and unpretentious. Examine how Melvin’s statement above can be considered to be a humble one.
- Melvin says that he feels that music can never be mastered. Discuss what he meant by the statement.
- Melvin also mentions that, rather than being a frustration, he thinks that working to master music is the greatest feeling in the world (p. 113). Explore his attitude toward music making. Describe his character traits at this point in the story.

“Not one bit. And do you know why? Because you’re the leader. Those kids will follow you to the end of the earth” (p. 129).

- Examine Gustav’s motivation in this scene. List clues that suggest that his intentions to promote the Mel-Tones are devious.
- Melvin and the band have been effectively working together as team since they left the Shivralt Home for the Hopelessly Eccentric Youth. Explain why Gustav is suggesting that Melvin establish himself as the leader rather than mere member of the band.
- Discuss why Melvin finds Gustav’s ideas regarding promoting the Mel-Tones to be appealing.
- Define the word celebrity. Tell why being a celebrity interests Melvin.



“Exchange all the looks of disgust you want,” Melvin continued, “but it doesn’t change the fact that I’m the only important person out there. The leader. The only essential element. The one they paid to see. The star” (pp. 156-157).

- Consider the changes in Melvin’s character since the band first came together. Discuss Gustav’s role in Melvin’s character change.
- Explore Melvin’s “friendship” with licorice root.
- List the consequences Melvin’s celebrity status has created. Identify what is lost and gained as result of being a self-proclaimed star.

“What have you done for me besides enslave me in your factory and rip me off and turn me into a licorice fiend” (p. 171)?

- The term *revelation* means to make plain, to realize, and to bring a notion out in the open. Explain how the quote above serves as a revelation for Melvin regarding Gustav’s deceptive manipulation.
- Identify the cause for Melvin’s revelation. Tell what happened to make him realize the truth about Gustav’s plans for him.
- Gustav and Melvin had become a team of two. Contrast their sense of teamwork with the early days of the band. List similarities and differences between the two.

“There are storms at the end of every summer,” they reasoned, “but we always prepared for them. This year we didn’t. Why not? Because we were too busy dancing, or singing, or taking violin lessons, or marching with the stupid marching band, or rehearsing with the idiotic chamber choir. What’s the common thread here? Music. Who invented music? Melvin. Who is to blame? Melvin. Who must be punished? Melvin” (pp. 189-190).

- Identify where the blame for the community’s unpreparedness lies.
- Compare and contrast the people of Grimstad’s lack of responsibility with Melvin’s inflated sense of stardom. Tell of ways that the situations are similar and different.
- Identify the “common thread” being referenced from the Grimstad community members’ point of view. Is their position justified, in your opinion? Why or why not?
- Does mastering music require shirking other responsibilities? Explain your answer.

Time seemed to stop. Because right there, on the edge of the town square, not in ghostly form but in the flesh, his trusty old lute slung in his hands, stood the guy they’d been eulogizing – hungry, thirsty, bone-tired, and dripping wet, but very much alive (pp. 231-232).

- Trace Melvin’s transformation. Describe how someone who was once considered to be hopelessly eccentric came to be loved and appreciated by an entire community. Note how the changes in Melvin’s character altered others.
- Explore the power of true friendship in this story.
- Discuss how the themes of leadership, responsibility, creativity, and integrity were played out in the story.



WHO AM I? - CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Objective: To craft narratives, based on in-depth character analysis, using the first-person point of view perspective.

Materials:

- *Melvin Invent's Music*
- Who Am I? - Character Analysis Graphic Organizer (Guide, p. 7)
- Pencil
- Paper

Procedure:

- Using the **Who Am I? - Character Analysis Graphic Organizer** as a guide, instruct students to consider the following aspects of character:
 - ~ Identify the character's unique traits. Note aspects of their behavior that serve to reveal their inner nature. List actions that show who the character is.
 - ~ Examine the character's traits to discover what they want. Discover their motivation. Describe the desires that make them tick.
 - ~ Search through the text to discover lines of narrative or dialogue that support claims about each character.
- In three or four sentences, write an introduction of each character from the character's point of view. Use the information gathered in the **Who Am I? - Character Analysis Graphic Organizer** develop voice and intent. Instruct students to use a narrative voice in the paragraphs, one that represents the character's perspective.
- Discuss character analysis summaries with class.

CHARACTER	CHARACTER TRAITS	CHARACTER WANTS	CITE EVIDENCE
MELVIN			
LAILA			
DAGMAR			
GUSTAV			
THE HEGOUMEN			

Describe the character's traits. Tell what they are like as a person.

Define what the character wants. Describe the action that supports your claim.

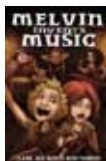
Discover and cite lines of narrative or dialogue found in the specific section of the text supporting your claims.



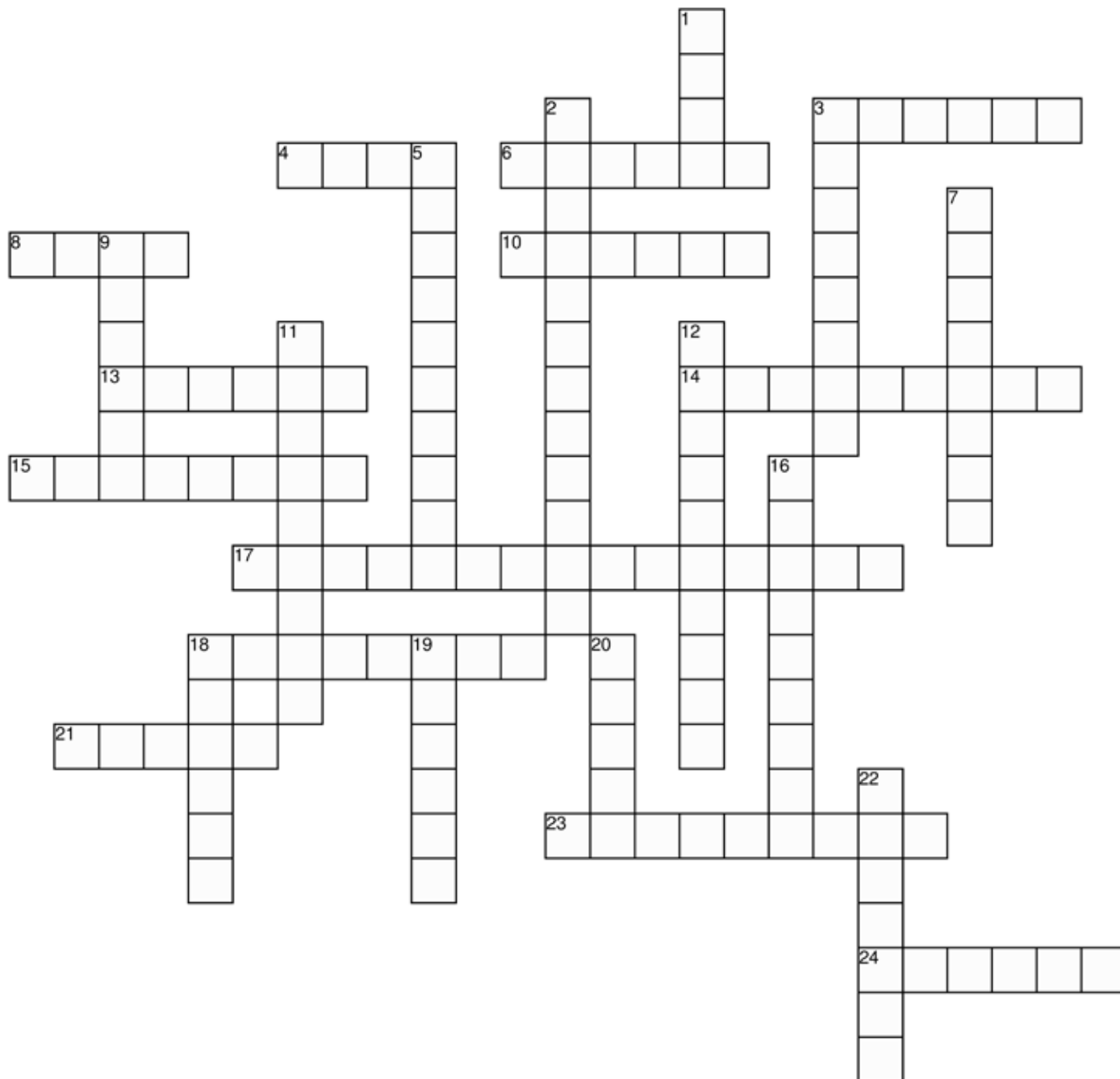
WHO AM I? - CHARACTER ANALYSIS GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Record your impressions of the following characters. Briefly describe their character traits, identify their desires, and cite evidence supporting your claims. In three of four sentences, write an introduction of each character from their point of view. Use voice and tone that would best depict the character's nature.

CHARACTER	CHARACTER TRAITS	CHARACTER WANTS	CITE EVIDENCE
MELVIN			
LAILA			
DAGMAR			
GUSTAV			
THE HEGOU MEN			



CROSSWORD PUZZLE



CROSSWORD PUZZLE CLUES

ACROSS

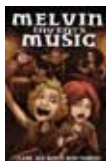
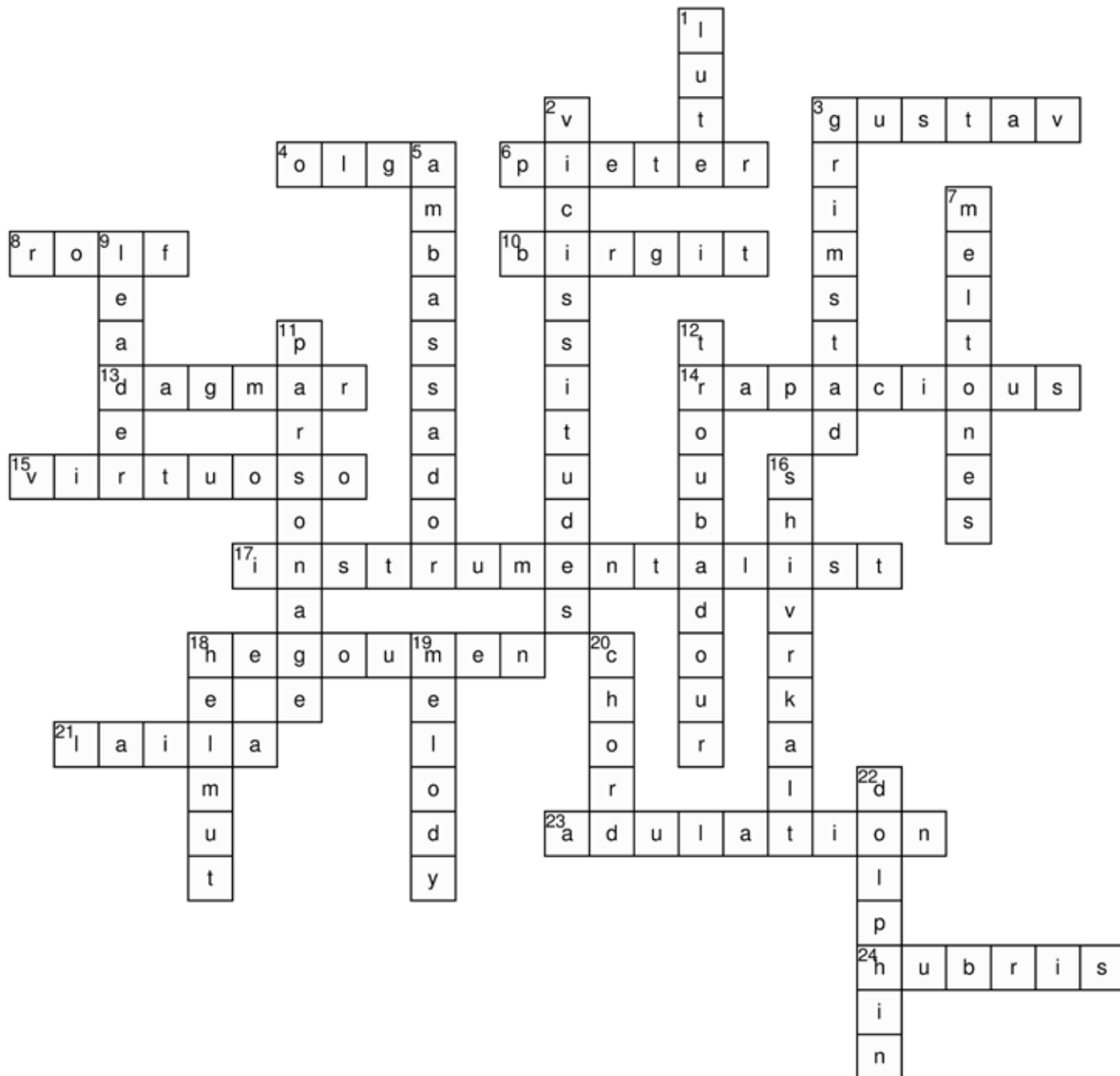
3. former headmaster for The Shivr Kalt Home for the Hopelessly Eccentric
4. helped Melvin and the band while at The Shivr Kalt Home for the Hopelessly Eccentric Youth
6. flute player for the Mel-Tones, Dagmar's love interest
8. drummer for the Mel-Tones
10. played xylophone for the Mel-Tones
13. lead singer for the Mel-Tones, Melvin's love interest
14. aggressively greedy or grasping
15. a person highly skilled in music
17. a player of a musical instrument
18. Ramstad's spiritual leader
21. Melvin's lifelong friend
23. flattery; excessive admiration or praise
24. exaggerated pride or self-confidence

DOWN

1. Melvin's instrument of choice
2. a change of circumstances or fortune, typically one that is unwelcome or unpleasant
3. "grim village"
5. a person who acts as a representative or promoter of a specified activity
7. name of Melvin's band
9. the person who leads or commands a group, organization, or country
11. small cottage attached to the church
12. a composer and performer during the Middle Ages
16. Melvin's homeland, now known as Scandinavia
18. the haberdasher
19. row of sounds
20. several sounds made at once
22. Melvin's salvation from certain death



CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS



THEME SEARCH

Objective: To determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges and to write a summary of observations.

Materials:

- Theme Search Graphic Organizer (Guide, p. 12)
- *Melvin Invents Music*, the book
- Pencil

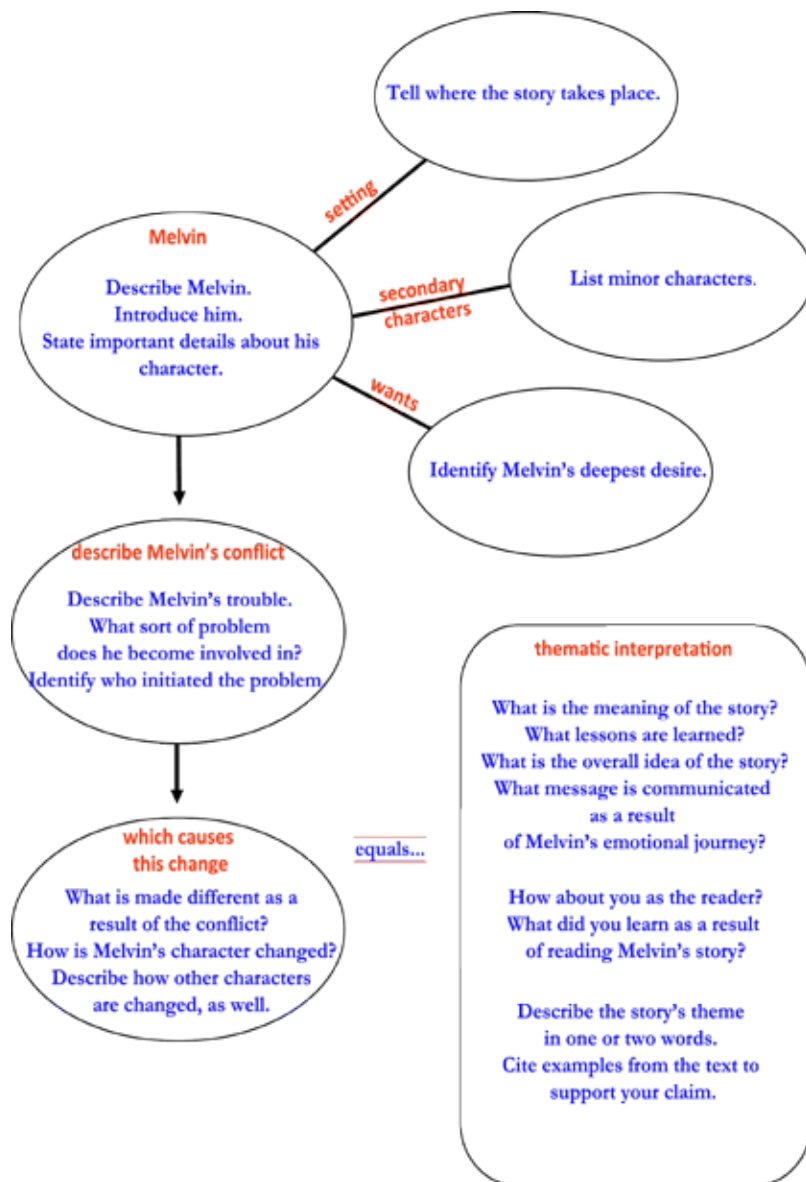
Procedure:

- Print and review **Theme Search Graphic Organizer** with students. Instruct students to consider each aspect of the **Theme Search Graphic Organizer** with the intent of narrowing a thematic focus.

Some ideas to explore:

- How does the setting contribute to the overall theme of the story?
- Consider the minor characters that serve to develop the theme.
- Analyze how Melvin's desire reflects the thematic focus of the story.
- Identify how theme is developed through the conflict and resolution of the story.
- Upon completion of the **Theme Search Graphic Organizer**, discuss students' thematic interpretations of *Melvin Invents Music*.
- Instruct students to write an informative essay expressing their interpretation of story and theme using the **Theme Search Graphic Organizer** as a guide.

Detailed example of the Theme Search Graphic Organizer

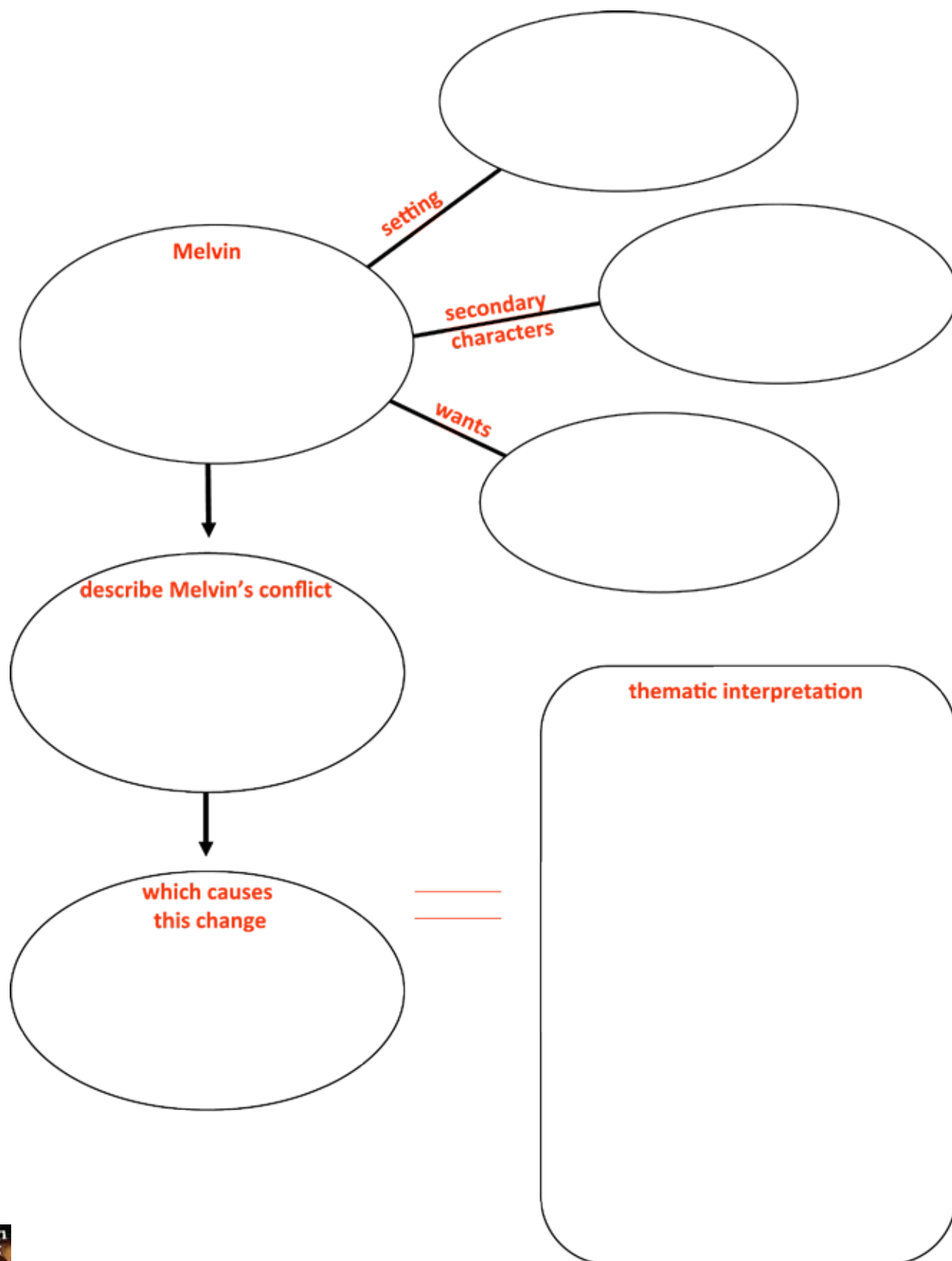


SUGGESTED THEMES TO EXPLORE:

friendship integrity respect originality
consideration honesty creativity
responsibility accountability leadership



THEME SEARCH GRAPHIC ORGANIZER



MAKE A HOMEMADE BAND

“Cool, isn’t it?” he said. “And the sound it makes . . . I thought I’d call that ‘music.’ What do you think, Dad?” But when he looked up, he found himself alone (p. 20).

A COMB HARMONICA



Supplies:

- A comb
- A piece of tissue

Instructions:

- Stretch the tissue tightly over the comb’s teeth.
- Place tissue on lips and hum. (Watch out. It tickles.)
- You have made a simple woodwind – a comb harmonica!



A COMB HARMONICA

A SNARE DRUM



Supplies:

- An empty oatmeal box
- Yarn or string
- Scissors
- 2 pencils

Instructions:

- Poke small holes on either side of the oatmeal box.
- Measure length of string to fit around your neck with ends of string stopping at waist line.
- Secure ends of string through the holes.
- Slip string over head. Rest oatmeal box on stomach.
- Tap lid of oatmeal box with pencil tips.
- You’ve made a percussion instrument – a snare drum.



A SNARE DRUM



A BOTTLE XYLOPHONE



Supplies:

- Several empty glass bottles
- A measuring cup
- Water
- A funnel
- A small spoon

Instructions:

- Using the funnel and the measuring cup, pour varied levels of water in the bottles.
- Tap the sides of the bottles with the spoon.
- You have made a percussion instrument – the bottle scales

Question: Which bottle do you think will have the highest pitch – the containing the most water or the one with the least amount?



A BOTTLE XYLOPHONE

A TOILET PAPER ROLL KAZOO



Supplies:

- An empty toilet paper roll
- A rubber band
- Waxed paper
- Scissors

Instructions:

- Cut a small hole on the side of the toilet paper roll.
- Cut a small square of waxed paper, just big enough to cover the roll's opening at the end.
- Secure waxed paper over the roll's end with rubber band.
- Gently blow into the open end.
- You have created a simple toilet paper roll kazoo!



A KAZOO



A MACARONI TAMBOURINE



Supplies:

- Two paper or Styrofoam plates
- A handful of dried macaroni
- Masking tape

Instructions:

- Place macaroni on one plate. Cover with the other plate.
- Tape around the edges of both plates, sealing the macaroni between the plates.
- You have made a percussion instrument – a macaroni tambourine!



A SHOEBOX GUITAR



Supplies:

- An empty shoebox
- 4 rubber bands (various widths)
- Scissors

Instructions:

- Cut a hole in the lower portion of the box top.
- Trim the ends of the lid, clearing away any fold or lip.
- Stretch rubber bands lengthways over the hole cut in the box top.
- Close box top and strum rubber bands.
- You have made a stringed instrument – a shoebox guitar!



ACADEMIC ALIGNMENTS

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS » READING: LITERATURE

		Discussion Questions	Who Am I? - Character Analysis	Crossword Puzzle	Theme Search
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1	Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	•	•		•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.	•			•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3	Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).	•	•		•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology	•		•	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1	Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	•	•		•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2	Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.	•			•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3	Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).	•	•		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.	•		•	
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	•	•	•	•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1	Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	•	•		•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.	•			•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.10	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	•	•	•	•

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS » WRITING

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.				•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.		•		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.		•		•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.				•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.		•		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.		•		•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.				•
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.		•		
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.		•		•



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS » SPEAKING & LISTENING

		Discussion Questions	Who Am I? - Character Analysis	Crossword Puzzle	Theme Search
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 4 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	●	●		●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.2	Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	●	●		●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 5 topics and texts</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	●	●		●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.2	Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	●	●		●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on <i>grade 6 topics, texts, and issues</i> , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.	●	●		●
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.4	Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.	●	●		●

TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

TEKS - GRADE 4

110.15.b.1	Reading/Fluency. Students read grade-level text with fluency and comprehension. Students are expected to read aloud grade-level stories with fluency (rate, accuracy, expression, appropriate phrasing) and comprehension.	●	●	●	●
110.15.b.2	Reading/Vocabulary Development. Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing.	●		●	
110.15.b.3	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.	●	●		●
110.15.b.3.A	Summarize and explain the lesson or message of a work of fiction as its theme.	●			●
110.15.b.3.B	Compare and contrast the adventures or exploits of characters (e.g., the trickster) in traditional and classical literature.	●	●		
110.15.b.6	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.	●	●		●
110.15.b.6.A	Sequence and summarize the plot's main events and explain their influence on future events.	●			●
110.15.b.6.B	Describe the interaction of characters including their relationships and the changes they undergo.	●	●		●
110.15.b.16	Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.		●		●
110.15.b.27	Listening and Speaking/Listening. Students use comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity.	●	●		
110.15.b.27.A	Listen attentively to speakers, ask relevant questions, and make pertinent comments.	●	●		
110.15.b.28	Listening and Speaking/Speaking. Students speak clearly and to the point, using the conventions of language. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to express an opinion supported by accurate information, employing eye contact, speaking rate, volume, and enunciation, and the conventions of language to communicate ideas effectively.	●	●		



TEKS - GRADE 5

		Discussion Questions	Who Am I? - Character Analysis	Crossword Puzzle	Theme Search
110.15.b.1	Reading/Fluency. Students read grade-level text with fluency and comprehension. Students are expected to read aloud grade-level stories with fluency (rate, accuracy, expression, appropriate phrasing) and comprehension.	•	•	•	•
110.15.b.2	Reading/Vocabulary Development. Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing.	•		•	
110.15.b.3	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.	•	•		•
110.15.b.6	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.	•	•		•
110.15.b.6.A	Describe incidents that advance the story or novel, explaining how each incident gives rise to or foreshadows future events.	•	•		•
110.15.b.6.B	Explain the roles and functions of characters in various plots, including their relationships and conflicts.	•	•		•
110.15.b.16	Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.		•		•
110.15.b.27	Listening and Speaking/Listening. Students use comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity.	•	•		•
110.15.b.29	Listening and Speaking/Teamwork. Students work productively with others in teams. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate in student-led discussions by eliciting and considering suggestions from other group members and by identifying points of agreement and disagreement.	•	•		•

TEKS - GRADE 6

110.18.b.1	Reading/Fluency. Students read grade-level text with fluency and comprehension. Students are expected to adjust fluency when reading aloud grade-level text based on the reading purpose and the nature of the text.	•	•	•	•
110.18.b.2	Reading/Vocabulary Development. Students understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing.	•		•	
110.18.b.3	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Theme and Genre. Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about theme and genre in different cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.	•	•		•
110.18.b.3.A	Infer the implicit theme of a work of fiction, distinguishing theme from the topic.	•			•
110.18.b.6	Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding.	•	•		•
110.18.b.15	Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas.		•		•
110.18.b.26	Listening and Speaking/Listening. Students will use comprehension skills to listen attentively to others in formal and informal settings. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity.	•	•		•
110.18.b.28	Listening and Speaking/Teamwork. Students work productively with others in teams. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate in student-led discussions by eliciting and considering suggestions from other group members and by identifying points of agreement and disagreement.	•			

