Think Like a Test-maker

**Warm-up: Answer the following questions.**

How do I...

...determine the purpose of a story? ...determine the tone or mood of a text? ...determine the theme of the text?

**Activity**

This activity is designed to be creative and to get you thinking like a test-maker. You will be asked to think “backwards.” This means taking a question “type,” which targets a particular skill, and create a text that fits that question. By considering how an author achieves purpose, or tone, or theme, you can better recognize how these elements are developed in other texts.

**STATION 1**

**The following two questions are pulled from test items for a passage about chess. We aren’t giving you the passage. Choose one of these two questions to “answer.” Once you choose an answer, write a paragraph that would make your answer to that question true of that paragraph. (Let’s help you out: if you don’t know the first thing about chess, pick a different game.)**

*1. What is the author's purpose in writing the second paragraph?*

 a. To explain the rules of chess b. To compare different types of games

 c. To talk about game pieces d. To persuade people to play chess

*2. Which best describes the main idea in the fourth paragraph?*

 a. This paragraph argues that players should think less.

 b. This paragraph explains how blitz chess is played.

c. This paragraph explains time clocks work.

d. This paragraph describes many different ways to play chess

**STATION 2**

**Read the quotes below, each of which is written in a specific tone. Consider how the tone is developed in each selection. What words are used to establish that specific tone? Now take the quoted lines and rewrite them using a completely different tone of your choosing. Consider the changes you will need to make to the diction and even the syntax in order to achieve your new tone.**

1. ***Casual and informal tone*** : “I want to ask the authorities what is the big deal? Why do not they control the epidemic? It is eating up lives like a monster.”
2. ***Gloomy tone***: “And the trees all died. They were orange trees. I don’t know why they died, they just died. Something wrong with the soil possibly or maybe the stuff we got from the nursery wasn’t the best. We complained about it. So we’ve got thirty kids there, each kid had his or her own little tree to plant and we’ve got these thirty dead trees. All these kids looking at these little brown sticks, it was depressing.”

**STATION 3**

**Below are a textual theme and a list of characters and their descriptions. Create a plot/conflict plan for a story about these characters that develops this theme. Your plan can be arranged as a concept map, a herringbone, a simple bullet point list, a chart, etc., and must include the following: primary and secondary conflicts (internal and external), necessary background information, a climax, and a resolution.**

* 1. Theme: Jealousy is a deadly emotion.
	2. Characters:
		1. Owen: a husband who love his wife dearly, but suspects her of infidelity.
		2. Donna: a loving wife who is beautiful and submissive and is wrongly accused of infidelity.
		3. Ian: Best friend to Owen who is jealous of the loving relationship that Owen and Donna have and is secretly in love with Donna.

**STATION 4**

**Choose one of the following poems to work with. Use the given theme and the first half of the poem to help you and your partner develop a second half that supports the given theme**.

* 1. ***Theme: Women are strong and powerful beings.***

**Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou**

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
[...YOU START HERE!]

***2. Theme: Thoughts of nature offer calm to a troubled mind.***

**I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud by William Wordsworth**

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling leaves in glee;
A poet could not be but gay,
In such a jocund company!
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
[YOU START HERE]

**STATION 5**

**Write down as many synonyms that you can think of for the following words (you need at least 5 for EACH):**

1. angry
2. happy
3. sad
4. scared
5. worried
6. hurt

**STATION 6**

**Re-write both of the following sentences, using synonyms for the bolded words.**

1. There are many **pleasant** fictions of the law in **constant** operation, but there is not one so pleasant or practically **humorous** as that which supposes every man to be of equal value in its **impartial** eye, and the benefits of all laws to be equally **attainable** by all men, without the smallest reference to the furniture of their pockets. —Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*
2. Like the waters of the river, like the motorists on the highway, and like the **yellow** trains **streaking** down the Santa Fe tracks, drama, in the shape of **exceptional** happenings, had never **stopped** there.—Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*