



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 10

Answer Key

The Orchard

The apple trees had been in the Whitfield family for three generations, and Clara had spent every autumn of her childhood climbing their gnarled branches, filling baskets faster than her grandfather could empty them into the truck bed. Now twenty-six and standing in the same orchard with a real estate agent's business card in her pocket, Clara found herself counting the trees instead of climbing them, calculating what the land might be worth to a developer who wanted to build houses where the orchard now stood.

Her grandmother, Ruth, still walked the rows every morning out of habit, a routine older than Clara's own memory of the place. "Your grandfather planted that one," Ruth said, pointing to a particularly crooked tree near the fence line, "the year we got married. Said crooked trees grow the sweetest apples, because they have to work harder for the sunlight." Clara had heard this story every autumn of her life, and every autumn it had meant less to her than the last, until this particular morning, when it suddenly meant everything.

The offer on the table was generous, more money than the Whitfield family had seen in a single transaction in decades. Clara's practical side, the side that had spent four years studying business in the city, understood exactly what a reasonable person would do. But standing beneath the crooked tree her grandfather had planted, watching her grandmother's weathered hand rest against its trunk the same way it must have rested there a thousand mornings before this one, Clara felt something shift inside her that no spreadsheet could fully account for.

She did not sign the papers that week, or the week after. Instead, she spent the following spring learning to prune branches, mend fences, and read the particular language of soil and weather her grandfather had spoken fluently. The orchard did not become more

profitable overnight, and some years it barely broke even. But every autumn, when the crooked tree near the fence line produced apples sweeter than any other tree on the property, Clara understood a little better what her grandfather had actually been trying to teach her, long before she was old enough to listen.

Circle the Correct Answer

1. What decision is Clara facing at the beginning of the story?

Answer: a) Whether to sell the family orchard to a developer

2. What does Ruth say about the crooked tree near the fence line?

Answer: b) Crooked trees grow the sweetest apples because they work harder for sunlight

3. What ultimately influences Clara's decision not to sign the papers?

Answer: b) A shift she feels while standing beneath the crooked tree with her grandmother

4. What happens to the orchard's finances after Clara decides to keep it?

Answer: b) It does not become more profitable overnight, and some years it barely breaks even

True or False

5. The orchard has been in the Whitfield family for three generations.

Answer: True

6. Clara immediately decides to sell the orchard without hesitation.

Answer: False

7. The crooked tree consistently produces sweeter apples than other trees on the property.

Answer: True

Fill in the Blank

8. Clara's grandfather said crooked trees have to work harder for the _____.

Answer: sunlight

9. Clara spent the following spring learning to prune branches and mend _____.

Answer: fences

Think and Explain

10. The crooked apple tree functions as a symbol in this story, appearing at the beginning, middle, and end. What do you think the crooked tree represents, and how does its meaning develop across the story? Use specific evidence from the text.

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers noting that the crooked tree likely symbolizes resilience, unconventional strength, or the value of hard-won growth, supported by its introduction as producing the sweetest apples 'because they have to work harder,' its role in Clara's emotional turning point, and its confirmation at the story's end as consistently producing the best fruit.

11. Compare Clara's 'practical side' with her emotional response beneath the crooked tree. How does the author use this internal conflict to develop the story's theme?

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers noting that the tension between Clara's business-trained, practical instincts and her emotional connection to family legacy develops a theme about value that cannot be measured financially, with the resolution (keeping the orchard despite modest profits) suggesting the author ultimately favors legacy and meaning over purely rational financial calculation.