

# Reading Toolkit: Grade 6 Objective 3.A.3.g

Standard 3.0 Comprehension of Literary Text

Topic A. Comprehension of Literary Text

Indicator 3. Analyze elements of narrative texts to facilitate understanding and interpretation

Objective g. Analyze internal and/or external conflicts that motivate characters and those that advance the plot

Assessment Limits:

In the text or a portion of the text

## Selected Response (SR) Item

### Question

Read this story titled "[A Team Full of Reasons.](#)" Then answer the question below.

Alex's *main* conflict in this story is between his —

- A. friendship with Darren and his dream of playing for the Pirates
- B. desire to play for a winning team and his feelings for his friends
- C. respect for Coach Landstrom and his fear of going to a new school
- D. concern for his parents and his determination to be a better athlete

Correct Answer

- B. desire to play for a winning team and his feelings for his friends

## Question

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## Handouts

### A Team Full of Reasons

by James M. Janik

"Change teams?"

"Sure. Why not? My team finished second last year. With you hitting cleanup for us, we'd take first place, no sweat."

"But what about my old team?"

"Those losers? I don't know how you can stand playing with those guys. They're terrible!"

Darren was right. We were terrible. Dead last . . . two years in a row. It would be great to make the playoffs or maybe win a league championship with Darren's Pirates. All I had to do was switch teams.

"Come on, Alex. There's nothing to it. Just tell Landstrom you'd rather play with your pals on the Pirates."

Darren was the only one I knew on the Pirates. He seemed all right. He was the best pitcher in the league. But all my real friends were on the Tigers.

"Think about it. You'll have to decide before the coaches' meeting tomorrow night." Darren waved and walked away. He mumbled over his shoulder, "Play with losers or win a championship . . . gee, real tough choice." His laughter faded as he turned the corner for home.

Freddy Garcia, Jerry Catalano, Frank Herman . . . we might be losers, but we had also been friends a long time. We'd played baseball together since the second grade.

Still, I would give anything to have a first-place trophy on my desk.

I pushed in the front door and tossed my backpack on the couch. Dad and Mom huddled over some papers on the dining room table.

"What're you doing home so early?" I asked. Dad's business normally kept him working way past dinnertime. The owner should always be the last one to leave, he liked to say.

"Oh, hi, Alex." Dad pushed away from the table a little too eagerly. "How's it going, Champ?"

"Great. Why are you home?"

"Your mother and I had some . . . er, business to discuss."

<sup>16</sup>"Business?" My parents discussing business? That's a first. "Like what?"

Dad glanced at Mom. He took a deep breath. "Well, I've had an offer for my company. A very attractive offer. We were just talking about selling the business. It could be a great opportunity for us."

"How would you feel about moving, Alex?" Mom added, sounding overly cheerful.

"Moving! No way. Mom, Dad, all my friends are here. My baseball team. My school. We can't move. Why would you sell your business, anyhow?" Dad had built it up from nothing. That business was his life, or so I'd thought.

"Alex, if I sell we'd have enough money to live anywhere we want. Any house, anywhere. You'd make new friends. Your mother could live near a city. She could go to movies and plays. You and I could go to big-league ballgames together. How's that sound?"

I glanced at Mom. Every year she drove two hours just to buy us new clothes at the mall in Austin. And Dad, he'd been driving that old Chevy even though the rust was eating away at the doors. He deserved a new car. "Sounds super, Dad." Just swell. I grabbed my backpack and moped upstairs.

Sure, moving would be great for everyone . . . everyone except me. I sat at my desk, leaned back, and put my feet up. They expected me to be happy about this? They thought I'd like leaving all my friends behind?

Yeah, right. I gave my desk a solid kick.

Last year's team picture tumbled from its spot on the shelf. I lunged forward and caught it. Easing back into my seat, I examined the photo.

Jerry Catalano grinned his stupid gapped-tooth smile at me from the front row. He'd let an easy ground ball bounce off his glove at shortstop that cost us the Orioles game last year.

A smirk forced its way onto my face. We'd jokingly checked his glove afterward to see whether it was made of leather or genuine U.S. steel.

<sup>27</sup>Frank Herman had cost us a few ballgames, too. His thick glasses always steamed up during the cooler night games. He'd lost four balls in the lights because of it. We'd razed<sup>1</sup> him about being the only guy to lose fly balls in his own personal fog.

Freddy Garcia, standing next to Frank in the picture, could play second base with the best of them. Unfortunately, he also had the lowest batting average in the county.

I remembered his 10th birthday party. He'd tried for hours but could not hit that piñata.<sup>2</sup> I grinned. We should have realized back then he'd never hit worth a lick.

Yeah, we'd blown a lot of ballgames. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad to move. Maybe I'd hook up with a good ball team, one like Darren's. A team of guys who knew their way around the bases. A team that won trophies. A team with a shortstop whose glove wasn't made of titanium.<sup>3</sup> I laughed again.

As I set the picture back on the shelf, I noticed Coach Landstrom's face. Last place, year after year, and still he came out three times a week to hit us ground balls at practice. Worst record in the league and still he took us out for ice cream. He said it was because we'd played our hearts out. I wasn't so sure about that. We did have fun, though.

I'd miss those guys.

"Did you have a good night's sleep, Alex?" Mom bustled about the kitchen. Normally she was off to work before I left for school. But today, she hummed a bouncy tune while emptying the dishwasher. She seemed happy. They must have decided to sell.

"Yeah. Aren't you going to be late for work?"

"I thought I'd have breakfast with my men this morning. Work can wait."

She winked and poured some orange juice.

"Morning, Champ," Dad said as he joined us at the table. He looked unusually smiley-faced, too. That did it, we had to be moving.

"Hi, Dad."

"Anything exciting happening at school today?" he asked.

"Naw, but after school I'll have to let Mr. Landstrom know I won't be playing on the Tigers this season. The coaches' meeting is tonight."

Mom stopped and turned. "Why would you do that?"

"Well," I stammered, "if we're going to move, Mr. Landstrom will need to pick up a new player."

Dad scooted his chair near mine. "Alex, we've decided to stay put."

"What! Why? I thought we were going to be rich and move off to the city."

"No one said anything about being rich, Alex," Mom said, pulling up a chair.

"I did some checking after dinner last night," Dad continued. "The company that wants to buy my business intends to move it to Illinois."

"So?"

"Alex, I have some employees who have worked for me since the beginning. Ten years. They can't pick up and move. This is their home. I couldn't let them lose their jobs after they've been so loyal to me through all the tough times."

"But what about Mom?" I turned toward her. "I thought you wanted out of this town."

"Oh, I don't know. I kind of like the good, honest people around here."

"Seems to me you like Austin way better."

"Austin? Heavens, who'd want to live there?" She laughed. "Traffic, noise. Once a year visits are enough city for me."

"Well, what about the money, Dad? Didn't you want a new car?"

"Alex, I don't need a new car. Wanting is different from needing. Besides, some things are more important than money." Dad put his hand on Mom's. "If it's all right with you, we'd rather stay right here."

"Fine by me." Whew!

I heaved my backpack over my shoulder and started up the walk to school.

"Hey, Alex!"

I turned. Darren trotted up behind me. "What's up?" I said.

"Not much, man. You going to call Landstrom today?"

Coach Landstrom, I'd almost forgotten. The Pirates. Should I switch teams?

"Wait until I tell the guys we've got your bat in our lineup this year. They'll go nuts!"

"Hold your horses,<sup>4</sup> Darren. I never said I'd make the switch."

"What? You're going to, aren't you?"

"Well . . . I don't know."

Darren stopped and gawked at me. "Are you insane?"

I chuckled. "Maybe I am, but I think I'll stick with the Tigers another year."

"Stick with those clowns? Why? You know they'll never win."

I thought of Jerry and Freddy and Coach Landstrom. I thought about what it would feel like playing against my old friends on the Tigers. Beating up on them with the Pirates wouldn't be much fun. I also thought about Dad driving his old Chevy so his employees could keep their jobs.

Things might get better for the Tigers next season. Maybe Jerry oiled his glove once or twice over the winter. Frank could have gotten contact lenses. Freddy might have learned to bunt.

One thing for sure, Coach Landstrom was willing to do whatever it took to make us winners. I definitely wanted to be there when it happened. Win or lose, I'd play my heart out for any one of those guys.

"You're probably right, Darren. It's just that there are some things more important than winning."

Darren shook his head. "Man, I can't think of a single one."

I laughed. I could think of a team full of reasons.

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<sup>1</sup>razzed " teased somebody

<sup>2</sup>piñata " a papier-mâché figure filled with candy and other treats

<sup>3</sup>titanium " a strong, lightweight element used in making steel

<sup>4</sup>"Hold your horses" " an informal expression that means "wait a minute"