**Grade 10 Common Core Aligned Prompt**

**The Shawl**

Elizabeth Wilson stared at the stranger’s exquisite shawl; shimmering gold threads adorned the silky turquoise like a glittering sunburst. At that moment, amid the crowded island marketplace, Elizabeth resolved to purchase one for her daughter, Maureen, who was admiring the seashells for sale in a nearby booth. *Yes,* Elizabeth envisioned, *a shawl like that would transform Maureen into a princess when she wore it to the summer festival*; *she’d be the envy of every young woman.*

After calling out to Maureen and taking hold of her hand, Elizabeth lunged into the crowds streaming around the vendors, focused only on the dazzling garment bobbing ahead of her. Fortunately, when she finally captured the stranger’s attention, Elizabeth found that the woman spoke English. With an obliging smile, she directed Elizabeth toward a shop where she’d purchased the woven shawl*.*

The tropical sun beat down mercilessly on Elizabeth and Maureen as they pushed headlong toward their next destination. Stepping inside the shop, Elizabeth blinked her eyes and adjusted to the dimly lit interior. Ignoring the temptations of the abundant racks, she described the shawl to the shopkeeper.

“That’s Ermelinda’s pattern,” the shopkeeper responded, recognizing the popular design. “Regrettably, I have none left.”

“Then could you tell me how to contact Ermelinda,” Elizabeth inquired, her voice sharp with frustration, “so I can speak with her about making one?”

“She lives on a nearby island,” the shopkeeper explained courteously with a practiced smile. “You could catch a ride with a local if you’re willing to pay.”

Elizabeth brusquely thanked him, scribbling down Ermelinda’s information before they rushed outside again. Wistfully, her daughter glanced at a charming café they passed, but the enticing aromas didn’t deter Elizabeth.

On the beach, the worn-down and unstable appearance of the dugout canoes sent a wave of trepidation shivering through Elizabeth. Thankfully, the nearby island was visible, its verdant green turtleback a scant quarter mile away.

*It’s a short ride,* Elizabeth rationalized, dismissing her fears as they clambered aboard. Despite some playful waves, they reached the neighboring shore without incident, but a steep, twisting path still loomed like a barricade between them and Ermelinda’s home. By the time they finally knocked on Ermelinda’s door, Elizabeth had scraped both knees from stumbling along the treacherous trail.

Promptly introducing herself, Elizabeth expressed her admiration for Ermelinda’s stunning turquoise shawl with its sunburst pattern. Elizabeth promised Ermelinda a generous amount if she’d make one for her that afternoon. Peering at the hut’s mud walls and palm-thatched crown, Elizabeth felt confident the woman would gratefully appreciate the considerable offer.

“I cannot weave today; I’ve promised to take my grandson to hunt for seashells at the shore,” Ermelinda responded. “No amount of silver can buy back a beautiful afternoon once it has passed,” she concluded, smiling softly. Then she signaled to her grandson to fetch his bucket and left the hut.

“How can you be so foolish?” Elizabeth cried, throwing the words at Ermelinda’s retreating back. Spinning around to leave, Elizabeth turned to Maureen, but the expression on her daughter’s face froze Elizabeth’s feet in place. Maureen was gazing at Ermelinda and her grandson with a depth of yearning that staggered her mother.

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**Item:**

Often, authors of literary texts use characters to advance the plot or to convey a message in a narrative. They might do this by describing what a character does, says, or thinks. In the narrative “The Shawl,” the author is attempting to convey the message that concern over material things and status can interfere with one’s enjoyment of life.

Write an essay explaining how the author uses the character of Elizabeth to convey a message that being concerned with material possessions and status can negatively impact one’s life. Be sure to analyze how Elizabeth changes or stays the same over the course of the narrative. Also examine the actions or reactions of the other characters.

As you plan, write, and edit, be sure that you:

* Examine how the author conveys this message through the character of Elizabeth.
* Consider the author’s descriptions of Elizabeth’s thoughts, words, and actions.
* Analyze Elizabeth’s interactions with other characters.
* Include an introduction, a logical arrangement of ideas, and a conclusion.

Be sure to check your writing for correct grammar, spelling, and mechanics.

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| Item ID: G10\_The Shawl | Grade: 10 |
| Content Area: Composition | |
| DOK: 4 |  |
| CCSS: **Writing 9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research**; Reading Literary 3**: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme. | |

Key Details:

* The author uses the character of Elizabeth to convey a message that material possessions are not the most important part of life.
* The character is shown as being very interested in having the most elaborate shawl so that her daughter will be “the envy of every young woman” at a festival.
* Elizabeth does not care that securing this shawl will require a great deal of time.
* The author describes Elizabeth’s actions in ways that show her as being greedy and myopic, e.g., “lunged into the crowds streaming around the vendors, focused only on the dazzling garment bobbing ahead of her.”
* After a long and dangerous journey to get the shawl, Elizabeth learns that not everyone is as focused on material things as she is.

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| **4** The response demonstrates an understanding of the complexities of the text.   * Fully addresses the demands of the question or prompt * Effectively uses explicitly stated text as well as inferences drawn from the text to support an answer or claim * Specifically analyzes Elizabeth’s actions and words * Considers Elizabeth’s relationships with/to more than one minor character in the text * Considers the end of the text and its clear message that Elizabeth’s obsession with possessions hinders enjoyment of life |
| **3** The response demonstrates an understanding of the text.   * Addresses the demands of the question * Uses some explicitly stated text and/or some inferences drawn from the text to support the answer |
| **2**  The response is incomplete or oversimplified and demonstrates a partial or literal understanding of the text.   * Attempts to answer the question or address the prompt * Uses explicitly stated text that demonstrates some understanding |
| **1** The response shows evidence of a minimal understanding of the text.   * Shows evidence that some meaning has been derived from the text to answer the question * Has minimal textual evidence |

**Exemplary Response**

In the narrative “The Shawl,” the author uses the character of Elizabeth to convey a message that material possessions are not the most important things in life. Elizabeth is very concerned with purchasing one particular shawl for her daughter, one that will make her “the envy of every young woman” at a festival. Even after she learns that it will not be easy to purchase the shawl and that it will require a lengthy and difficult trip, she still wants to purchase the shawl. Her daughter, Maureen, seems very uninterested in the shawl and would rather browse seashells. But Elizabeth will not be deterred.

The way the author describes Elizabeth’s focus on the shawl, saying that she “lunged into the crowds streaming around the vendors, focused only on the dazzling garment bobbing ahead of her” implies that the mother’s attention is misplaced. The author has already implied that the mother and daughter are at a bustling market in an exotic setting, yet instead of taking in her surroundings and enjoying the atmosphere, Elizabeth focuses her attention only on the shawl she wants her daughter to have. In this way, the author implies the message that preoccupation with material things hinders enjoyment of life.

Later in the narrative, however, the author goes beyond this subtle implication and describes a much more obvious occurrence. After a dangerous journey in a “dugout canoe” and up a “steep, twisting path,” Elizabeth and Maureen finally reach the weaver’s home, where Elizabeth assumes she will be able to get the shawl. However, the weaver expresses that her promise to take her grandson to the beach is her priority, and that “no amount of silver can buy back a beautiful afternoon once it has passed.” Elizabeth cannot understand such an attitude and asks, “How can you be so foolish?” Through this description of Elizabeth’s interaction with the weaver, the author further conveys the message that Elizabeth is suffering ill consequences through her focus on material goods.

When the weaver refuses Elizabeth’s request and leaves the hut with her grandson, Maureen stares after the two with longing. Elizabeth is staggered by this. The author implies through the description of Elizabeth’s reaction to the look that Elizabeth may have learned a lesson, but the reader cannot be sure.