"The **plot** is the vehicle for **teaching about ideas**"
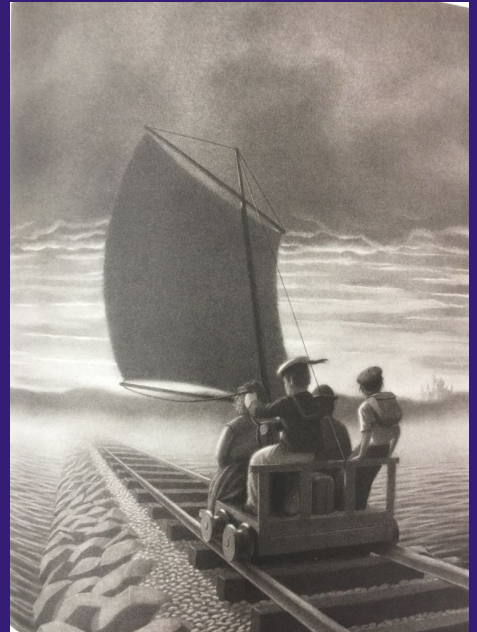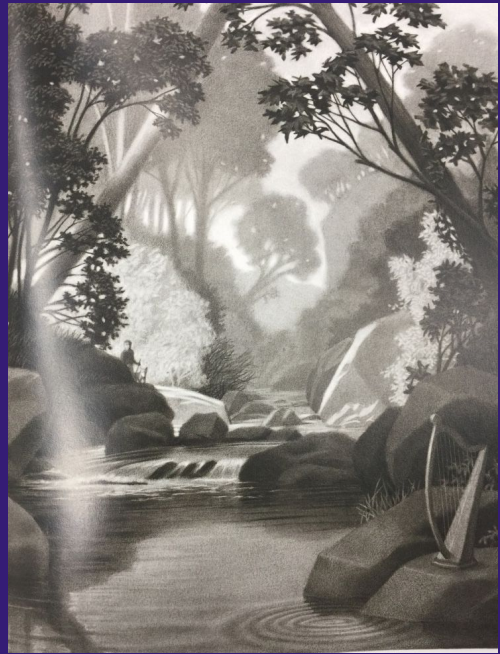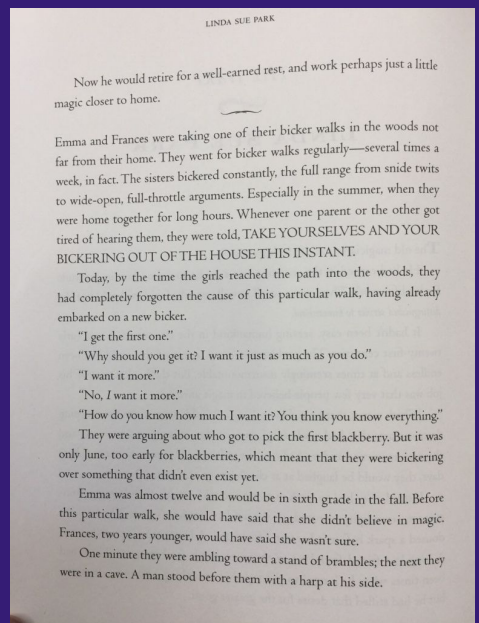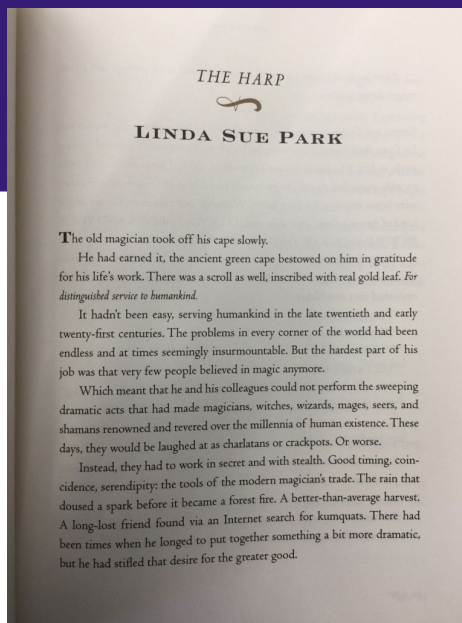
"What is the story really about?"

Consider how the author develops **themes** across a narrative, including by connecting scenes

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THE HARP

LINDA SUE PARK

The old magician took off his cape slowly.

He had earned it, the ancient green cape bestowed on him in gratitude for his life's work. There was a scroll as well, inscribed with real gold leaf. *For distinguished service to humankind.*

It hadn't been easy, serving humankind in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The problems in every corner of the world had been endless and at times seemingly insurmountable. But the hardest part of his job was that very few people believed in magic anymore.

Which meant that he and his colleagues could not perform the sweeping dramatic acts that had made magicians, witches, wizards, mages, seers, and shamans renowned and revered over the millennia of human existence. These days, they would be laughed at as charlatans or crackpots. Or worse.

Instead, they had to work in secret and with stealth. Good timing, coincidence, serendipity: the tools of the modern magician's trade. The rain that doused a spark before it became a forest fire. A better-than-average harvest. A long-lost friend found via an Internet search for kumquats. There had been times when he longed to put together something a bit more dramatic, but he had stifled that desire for the greater good.

LINDA SUE PARK

Now he would retire for a well-earned rest, and work perhaps just a little magic closer to home.

Emma and Frances were taking one of their bicker walks in the woods not far from their home. They went for bicker walks regularly—several times a week, in fact. The sisters bickered constantly, the full range from snide twits to wide-open, full-throttle arguments. Especially in the summer, when they were home together for long hours. Whenever one parent or the other got tired of hearing them, they were told, TAKE YOURSELVES AND YOUR BICKERING OUT OF THE HOUSE THIS INSTANT.

Today, by the time the girls reached the path into the woods, they had completely forgotten the cause of this particular walk, having already embarked on a new bicker.

"I get the first one."

"Why should you get it? I want it just as much as you do."

"I want it more."

"No, I want it more."

"How do you know how much I want it? You think you know everything."

They were arguing about who got to pick the first blackberry. But it was only June, too early for blackberries, which meant that they were bickering over something that didn't even exist yet.

Emma was almost twelve and would be in sixth grade in the fall. Before this particular walk, she would have said that she didn't believe in magic. Frances, two years younger, would have said she wasn't sure.

One minute they were ambling toward a stand of brambles; the next they were in a cave. A man stood before them with a harp at his side.
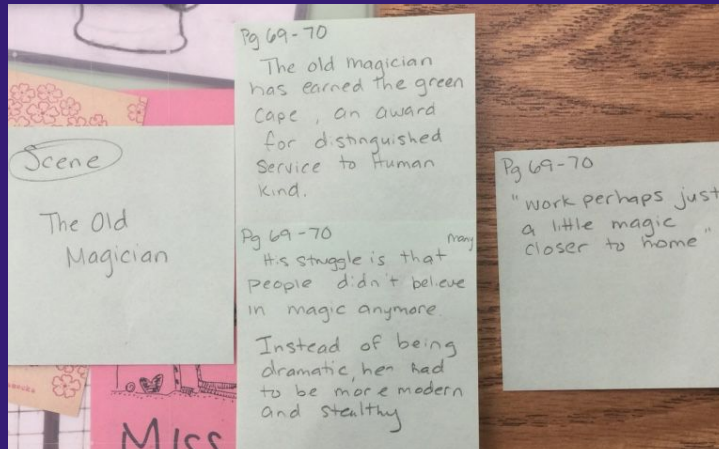

This is just here for show… you can read aloud from your copy and model how you are looking at the narrative and synthesizing the scene. Then after reading the first two pages, discuss the scene(s) and possible themes that the author is developing.

Lesson might span for two days…
Day 1: read aloud and work with jigsaw
Day 2: Synthesizing and reading the story to find development of themes and reading aloud the last three pages to wrap up the story and draw conclusions.

"What is the story really about?"

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"What is the story really about?"

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Scene Shift

As a team, work together, to read the text and synthesize the scene. Think...How this can contribute to the author's development of theme?