

## Tracing Themes Answer Key

### Possible Theme(s):

- The power of kindness to create belonging.
- Friendship helps people feel accepted.
- Small gestures can make a big difference.

### Supporting Evidence (Possible Lines):

- *"Just days earlier, she had sat at the edge of the group, unsure if anyone would notice her silence."*
- *"Now, a friend leaned over to share a marshmallow, smiling as if she had always been part of the circle."*
- *"She felt warmth, not from the fire, but from belonging."*

### Explanations:

1. The passage's theme is about how kindness and friendship can transform someone's feelings of isolation.
2. Leah begins as an outsider ("unsure if anyone would notice her silence") but is welcomed through a small act of kindness ("share a marshmallow").
3. The change in Leah's feelings, from doubt to belonging, shows how human connection develops through simple, caring gestures.
4. The reader might learn that even a small effort to include someone can make them feel valued and part of the group.

### Teacher Notes:

- Accept variations of theme wording if they reflect the passage's central idea.
- Emphasize that a **theme is a general message about life**, not just a detail about the characters.
- Extension: Have students write a short journal reflection about a time when a small gesture of kindness made them feel included, connecting real life to the text.