

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Strengths In Silence

**Directions:** Read the passage carefully and pay attention to how the main character learns about **understanding and appreciating differences**. Identify the **theme** and think about a time in your own life when you learned a similar lesson. Write a short paragraph explaining how the story's message connects to your own experiences.

### The Mismatched Partners

When the art teacher announced a group project, everyone rushed to pair up with friends. Jay hesitated for too long and ended up with Malik, a quiet student who rarely spoke in class. Jay frowned at first. He liked loud brainstorming and bright colors, while Malik preferred soft tones and silent focus.

At first, it felt awkward. But as the week went on, Jay noticed Malik's steady attention to detail: the careful shading, the patience with every brushstroke. Their mural turned out better than Jay ever imagined. When the teacher asked who had painted the tree's gentle shadows, Jay proudly said, "That was all Malik."

After class, Malik smiled shyly. "You added the life," he said. "I just added the calm." For the first time, Jay realized how strength can look—and sound—different.

### Response Prompts

1. What is the story's main **theme or life lesson**?
2. Which part of the story best shows this message?
3. Have you ever learned a similar lesson about respecting differences? Describe briefly.
4. Write a short paragraph (5-7 sentences) explaining how the story's message connects to your life.