Determining Theme

Use the note-taker below to keep ideas and details about possible themes of *Return to Sender*.

Theme	Discussion Day 1 (pp. 1–106) Evidence that develops the theme	Discussion Day 2 (pp. 1–263) Evidence that develops the theme
Working together	• Tyler's father is seriously injured while working on the farm (5) • The work is too much for the remaining family members (7) • Hiring migrant workers enables the Paquette family to keep the farm (13)	• After Thanksgiving dinner, even though it is late, the Mexican workers return to work to milk the cows (112) • Tyler's Aunt Vicky says, "I just don't know how we're expected to survive." (113) • Mari's father and uncles work long hours on the farm feeding and cleaning (117) • Tyler writes note to Mari, "Thank you for helping save our farm" (191) • Mari is hurt when she feels like Tyler does not appreciate how hard her family is working to help the Paquette family stay on the farm, not just about the money (205) • Pages 250–251 describes how the Paquettes and the Mexican workers split work on the farm

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Understanding others	• Tyler realizes that he has not spent much time with people who are different from him and how limited his experience has been (49) • Tyler notices that the new workers speak Spanish, which makes him curious but also uncertain (Ch. 3–4). • Tyler begins to observe rather than judge, noticing differences without fully understanding them yet.	• Mari's family understands Grandma's connection to the farm–, Mari's uncle says, "you must promise not to send her from her home...we know what that is like." (134) • Tyler understands Grandma's need for the farm (111) • Tyler recognizes Mari's need for hope, shows her Pleiades, or Seven Sisters, all sisters reunited (146) • When visiting Tío Felipe in prison, Tyler feels scared, he thinks about how Felipe must feel (152) • Tyler begins to see Mr. Rosetti as a grandfatherly friend as he gets to know him (216)
Home and belonging	• The Paquette farm is described as more than land; it is deeply connected to the family's identity and history (6) • Tyler worries that losing the farm would mean losing his sense of home and devastate his dad • Mari's family is also connected to the farm; more than one family can belong to the same place	• Tyler grows closer to the three Marias through experiences like stargazing (117), says "there's room for you here on our farm" (143) • Belonging complicated–Ofie and Luby are American–Papá realizes "They belong here. This is their home" (124) • Grandma makes Mari's family feel like they belong–inviting to Thanksgiving (110), keeping company, has the girls call her "Grandma" (200) • Grandma is very connected the farm–she wants to be carried out "feet first" (136) • Mari says, "I used to feel so alone, neither Mexican nor American. But now that I have a special friend I feel like I don't have to be one thing or another."

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		(202) • Grandma plans to go to Mexico and visit Mari's family (253)
Respect and fairness	• Tyler becomes aware that some people do the hardest work but receive little recognition • The workers' labor is necessary for the farm's survival, yet they are forced to hide (59) • "The cows can't wait for their milking till the politicians get the laws changed." (87)	• Tyler does not want Mary and her family to have to leave. "He wants the law to be changed so they can stay, helping the family as well as themselves." (113) • When Ben and Tío Felipe are stopped by the police Felipe becomes a fugitive and Ben is just escorted home (122) • "Even though this country is treating you like a criminal, you are our hero!" (157) • Tyler continues to struggle with how his family can be good patriots and also employ undocumented workers (187) • Mr. Bicknell ask others to consider the role immigrants have always played in shaping Vermont (190-191) • "Why do we always have to hide how hard we are working? We are not criminals!" (203) • Coyotes refer to humans as cargo (22)

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Doing what is right		• After picking up the money, Tyler says the flag feels much heavier than it did before (186) • He begins to question if he is an upstanding young man (187) • Mr. Bicknell and Mom discuss what a good man Tyler is, but he doesn't feel like it (192–193) • When Mr. Rosetti falls, Tyler does the right thing and tells him about the money (193) • "Tyler feels older and wiser, as if he has both lost and found himself this town meeting night" (194) • Tyler, who normally would not fight, gets into one with the boys who always make fun of Mari (204) • Mr. Rosetti does not want to give money to the coyotes (220) • Tyler gives his savings to Mari's father to save her mother (222) • Tyler and Mari have to lie to his parents and aunt and uncle about the real reason for their trip (231) • They save Mari's mother's life • "Being an adult is about navigating your way through choices and challenges using the North Star of your heart and conscience." (257) • Doing what is right can be confusing and contradict what you initially think or believe

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