The Gift of the Magi: Claim and Counterclaim

**Important definitions**

**Claim**: a statement of a writer’s opinion on a given subject matter

**Counterclaim**: a statement that opposes, or provides an opposite opinion on, a claim.

Within one text, it is often possible to find evidence that adequately supports both a claim and a counterclaim. This is where your skill in analysis comes in. Good readers know how to carefully read text and make strong inferences based on evidence. Good writers know how to carefully explain the evidence they have chosen in order to prove their claims.

**Directions:** Below are two statements, both of which have SOME evidence to support them in “The Gift of the Magi.” **Find evidence to support each statement**. Write the evidence in the box. Then, decide which statement is better supported by the evidence in the story, craft a claim, choose a piece of evidence to support your claim, and explain how your evidence supports the claim you crafted.

**EXAMPLE SET:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statement 1: Jim and Della are poor.**  | **Statement 2: Jim and Della live comfortably.** |
| * “Della counted it three times. $1.87.”(1)
* “Furnished rooms at a cost of $8 a week. There is little more to say about it. (1)”
* “He was being paid only $20 a week” (2)
* “She had put aside as much as she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week is not much. Everything had cost more than she had expected. It always happened like that.” (2)
 | * “The James Dillingham Youngs were very proud of two things which they owned. One thing was Jim’s gold watch. It had once belonged to his father. And, long ago, it had belonged to his father’s father. The other thing was Della’s hair. (2)”
 |

1. Which **statement** **above** is stronger and supported most thoroughly? **1 or 2**
2. Write a **claim** based on the evidence you decided was the strongest:

**In the Gift of the Magi, it is clear to see that Jim and Della are poor due to the way they are described.**

1. Write the strongest piece of **text evidence** you found:

**He was being paid only $20 a week.**

1. Explain how your evidence supports your claim: (“\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_shows” + restate your **claim** + “because” + reason why):

**The fact that Jim only made $20 a week, and Della had only $1.87 to buy Jim a present shows that Jim and Della were poor.**

**Now complete the next 3 statement sets on your own!**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statement 1: Della had a good reason to sell her hair.** | **Statement 2: Della did not have a good reason to sell her hair.** |
|  |  |

1. Which **statement** **above** is stronger and supported most thoroughly? **1 or 2**
2. Write a **claim** based on the evidence you decided was the strongest:
3. Write the strongest piece of **text evidence** you found:
4. Explain how your evidence supports your claim: (“\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_shows” + restate your **claim** + “because” + reason why):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statement 1: Jim and Della are disappointed in each other.** | **Statement 2: Jim and Della respect each****other’s decisions.** |
|  |  |

1. Which **statement** **above** is stronger and supported most thoroughly? **1 or 2**

1. Write a **claim** based on the evidence you decided was the strongest:
2. Write the strongest piece of **text evidence** you found:
3. Explain how your evidence supports your claim: (“\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_shows” + restate your **claim** + “because” + reason why):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Statement 1: Jim and Della are wise** | **Statement 2: Jim and Della are foolish** |
|  |  |

1. Which **statement** **above** is stronger and supported most thoroughly? **1 or 2**
2. Write a **claim** based on the evidence you decided was the strongest:
3. Write the strongest piece of **text evidence** you found:
4. Explain how your evidence supports your claim: (“\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_shows” + restate your **claim** + “because” + reason why):