YEAR 8 · READING COMPREHENSION

Character Analysis from Novel Extract

Read the extract carefully, then use details from the text to support your ideas.

Name _____ **Date** _____

THE GREENHOUSE KEY

By the time Mara reached the school greenhouse, the rain had turned the path silver. A notice on the door said the old building would be cleared on Monday. She had read it three times, but she still found herself checking the little blue pot at the far end of the benches.

Inside, she moved between the empty trays without switching on the light. She knew exactly where to step. In her pocket, the spare key pressed against her palm; Mr Ellis had trusted her with it for the gardening club. The seedling in the blue pot leaned towards the cloudy glass, its stem bent but not broken. Mara had promised Tom they would save it. Their grandad had given them the seeds last spring, saying the sunflowers would grow taller than the fence.

Tom waited by the door, holding a torch. “You said we were only looking,” he whispered.

“We are,” Mara replied, already lifting the pot. When the stem wobbled, she stopped and tied it carefully to a wooden label. Tom watched her, the torch shaking slightly in his hand.

A latch clicked somewhere outside. Mara froze. She could put the pot down and slip out alone. Instead, she pushed it into Tom’s arms. “Go. I’ll lock up.”

“You’ll get caught.”

“Probably,” she said. “Just don’t drop it.” Tom hurried towards the path. Mara stayed behind, one hand closed around the key, listening for footsteps.

Analyse the character

1. **Which two personality traits** best describe Mara? Support each trait with a detail from the extract.

2. What motivates Mara to enter the greenhouse and take the pot? Use evidence to explain your ideas.

3. How is Mara’s relationship with Tom presented? Refer to what they say and do.

4. Choose one detail describing Mara and one line of her dialogue. Explain how each shapes your impression of her.

5. At the end, what does Mara’s decision to stay suggest about her? Support your interpretation with evidence.