

SAVE ME A SEAT

Pre-Assessment & Interpretation Guide

CENTRAL IDEA

What does it take to actually make room for someone — and what assumptions do we have to let go of first?

Novel: Save Me a Seat by Sarah Weeks and Gita Varadarajan

Setting: Albert Einstein Elementary School, Hamilton, New Jersey

Designed for: Advanced readers in grades 4–6, with adaptable supports

TEXT USE

Use a teacher-approved copy of the complete novel. This resource supplies original prompts and no reproduced passages.

Purpose & Directions

This pre-assessment reveals current reasoning about assumption, perspective-taking, evidence, and belonging. It does not require knowledge of the novel and should not be used as a gatekeeping score.

Administration

Allow 30–45 minutes, or split across two sittings. Students may write, dictate, or record oral responses. Keep the reasoning demand constant.

Student Directions

- Explain how you know; more words do not automatically mean stronger thinking.
- Name uncertainty when evidence is limited.
- You may revise any response.
- Do not search the internet during this task.

1. First Impressions

Scenario

A new student assumes another kid will become their best friend because they share one obvious thing in common — the same hometown, the same last name, the same favorite team.

Task

What pressures or hopes might be behind that assumption? What might the new student not know yet?

2. Speaking Up

Scenario

A student gets distracted and overwhelmed by classroom noise but has never told a teacher why.

Task

What might be stopping this student from speaking up? What would make it easier for them to ask for help?

3. Whose Fault Is It?

Scenario

Someone is tricked into breaking a personal or family rule they didn't know they were breaking.

Task

Who is responsible for what happened? What changes for that person once they understand what really happened?

4. Reading Between the Lines

Scenario

Two classmates each tell an honest account of the same argument, but the stories don't quite match.

Task

How can two honest accounts of the same event be different? What might each account leave out?

5. Not All the Same

Scenario

Two students share the same cultural background, but one assumes they'll automatically understand and like each other.

Task

What's risky about assuming everyone from the same background is alike? What would you want to find out instead?

6. The Story Two Ways

Scenario
A rumor spreads about something that happened at recess, but the two kids involved remember it differently.

Task

What kind of evidence would help you figure out what actually happened? What should you do while you're still not sure?

7. What Makes Room at the Table

Task

Name three things a person or a group actually has to do — not just say — to make room for someone new.

Student Self-Reflection

Which response best shows your thinking? Why?

Where did you need more evidence?

Did any answer change while you wrote?

Facilitator Interpretation Guide

Dimension	Emerging	Developing	Advanced
Claim	Opinion or summary	Defensible but broad	Nuanced, conditional, revisable
Evidence	Unanchored assertion	Relevant example	Selects evidence by purpose and limits
Perspective-Taking	One character's view only	Names two views	Explains why views differ and what each misses
Reasoning	Evidence listed	Explains a link	Explains mechanism, motive, and uncertainty
Complexity	Dismisses alternatives	Mentions another view	Tests counterevidence and revises

Do Not

- Convert the matrix into an IQ label or single permanent score.
- Penalize handwriting, spelling, speech, or length when they are not the construct.
- Assume a kind answer equals a sophisticated one.
- Delay access supports until a student struggles.

Instructional Decision Sheet

Dimension	Current Evidence	Next Challenge / Support
Claim		
Evidence		
Perspective-Taking		
Reasoning		
Complexity		

Compacting Decision

☐ Maintain core sequence ☐ Compact routine practice ☐ Accelerate to independent inquiry

Access Plan

Reassessment after Mission 3