

# Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Compare and Contrast

Read the short story and answer each question.



## The Echo Protocol

Aria had always known she was different. Not just because her eyes glowed faintly in the dark, or because her hearing could pick up the buzz of a light three rooms away—but because she didn't remember anything from before she turned ten. When her school assigned a project on family history, Aria searched the public database and found nothing. Not a birth record. Not even a last name. That night, she found a sealed envelope under her bed. Inside: a microchip labeled *Echo Protocol*. She activated it with her school tablet. A message blinked on the screen: *ARIA, YOU WERE CREATED FOR A PURPOSE. FIND UNIT 12*. The next day, she skipped class and followed the chip's signal into the city's lower sectors. Unit 12 wasn't a lab. It was a person—another kid, just like her. Glowing eyes. Sharp hearing. No memory before age ten. "You're not alone," Unit 12 said. Aria didn't know what Echo Protocol meant. Not yet. But for the first time, she didn't feel like a mystery. She felt like a piece of something bigger.

## The Reflection Booth

Every visitor who stepped into the Reflection Booth saw something different. When Niko finally reached it—after waiting in line for three hours at the World Expo—he expected mirrors, maybe lights. Instead, he stood in a round room filled with mist. "Begin scan," a voice said. "Relax your mind." The fog shifted. Shapes formed in the air. A younger version of Niko appeared—wearing his grandfather's old toolbelt, the one he used to sneak from the shed. Then another version—older, taller, standing on a stage, voice strong. Then one more—silent, sitting beside someone in a hospital bed, holding their hand. Niko blinked. "What is this?" The voice responded, "Reflections of who you are, who you could be, and who you may become." The mist cleared. Outside, his friend asked, "What did you see?" Niko hesitated, then smiled. "Myself. A few different ones. But all me."



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Echo Protocol & The Reflection Booth

1. What theme is explored in both *The Echo Protocol* and *The Reflection Booth*?

- A. Both explore how people discover their identity and understand who they are.
- B. Both focus on building advanced robots for world competitions.
- C. Both describe families that lose contact after disasters.
- D. Both show characters who never question their past or future.

2. How do the two characters' journeys to understanding themselves differ?

- A. Aria discovers others like her and finds belonging through connection; Niko learns about his inner identity through visualization and reflection.
- B. Niko builds a microchip, while Aria uses a mirror to explore emotions.
- C. Both characters rely on others to tell them exactly who they are.
- D. Aria solves a math problem while Niko discovers time travel.

3. Fill in the blank:

In *The Reflection Booth*, Niko sees \_\_\_\_\_ versions of himself in the mist.

4. How do Aria and Niko each begin to understand their identity in different ways?

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5. What message do both stories share about how people can grow into their identity?

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# Parent and Teacher Guide

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**Guide Reading Level:** V

**Lexile Level:** 950L–1100L

**Grade Level:** 5th Grade, End of the Year

**Genre:** Science Fiction

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## Introducing the Text

“These two science fiction stories explore the theme of identity—one through a mystery of origin and the other through a futuristic technology that shows possible futures. As students read, they’ll compare how the genre allows each story to explore personal discovery in a unique way.”

**Vocabulary:** protocol, scan, reflection, identity, connection

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## Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you think science fiction stories can teach us about real-life themes like identity or belonging?
  2. How can a character’s journey reveal who they are inside?
  3. What types of technology might help a character learn more about themselves?
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## During Reading Discussion Questions

1. How do Aria and Niko respond differently to their discoveries?
  2. What parts of the story hint at deeper themes beyond the science?
  3. What genre elements are used to explore identity in each case?
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## After Reading Discussion Questions

1. How are the stories similar and different in how they explore self-discovery?
  2. What kinds of emotions do Aria and Niko experience as they learn more about themselves?
  3. Why do you think both stories focus on the idea of who we are and who we may become?
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## Activity Idea

Have students create a “sci-fi identity snapshot” of themselves—an illustration or short paragraph imagining a future version of themselves or a personal mystery they could explore. Ask them to include a message or question their future self might send back.

