

Strides Between Us — Student Printable Pack

A classroom-ready companion for studying themes, character arcs, and narrative structure in **Strides Between Us**.

Character Map — Jake

- Key Traits: resilient, introspective, emotionally guarded.
- Turning Points: injury, homelessness, return to running.
- Emotional Arc: shame → numbness → grief → reconnection.
- Evidence: Students add textual references.

Character Maps — Supporting Characters

Coach Roberts — mentor, moral anchor, symbol of belief.

Paige — stability, emotional distance, protection of Emily.

Mitch — rival, mirror of 'what Jake could have been'.

Emily — innocence, unconditional connection.

Dolce — loyalty, memory trigger, emotional grounding.

Themes Organizer

- Resilience: recovery is not linear.
- Identity: redefining self beyond sport.
- Loss & Healing: emotional trauma and recovery.
- Mentorship: Coach Roberts' influence.
- Hope: rebuilding life slowly.

Students write examples from the text.

Plot Structure Worksheet

Exposition: Jake's homelessness.

Inciting Incident: memory of the accident returning.

Rising Action: training, reconnection attempts.

Climax: the charity race.

Resolution: epilogue and renewed family bonds.

Symbolism & Motifs

- Shoes: identity + reclaiming purpose.
- Running: freedom, fear, redemption.
- Dolce: memory of belonging.
- Silence: emotional numbing.

Students interpret symbolic meaning.

Quote Analysis

Students analyze:

1. 'You don't run because you're fearless...'
2. 'Pain outlives healing.'
3. 'You don't disappear. You got hurt.'
4. 'Maybe the fight is the enemy.'
5. Race commentary from final chapter.

Creative Writing Prompt

Write 'the missing chapter'—Jake's thoughts the night before homelessness.

Include: emotional conflict, sensory detail, internal monologue.

Real-World Connections

Topics:

- Homelessness and mental health.
- Barriers to recovery in real life.
- Athletic identity loss.
- Students connect novel themes to real-world issues.

Culminating Task — Choice Board

Students choose one:

- Write a monologue from Jake.
- Rewrite race from Mitch's POV.
- Create a poster timeline.
- Theme collage.
- Short comparative essay on resilience.