Read

Genre: Historical Fiction

Cleopatra Finds Her Voice

by Vicki Alvear Shecter, *Highlights*

WORDS TO KNOW

As you read, look inside, around, and beyond these words to figure out what they mean.

- **barge**
- **ceremonies**

1 Eleven-year-old Princess Cleopatra sailed the Nile River on the royal barge. Her father, the king of Egypt, played his flute.

2 They were sailing from their palace in Alexandria to cities along the Nile. The king would often lead important ceremonies.

3 Cleopatra watched for slithering crocodiles and yawning hippos. Sometimes she would catch a glimpse of a Sacred Ibis bird tiptoeing along the marshy banks.

4 As the royal barge sailed, people crowded the banks, hoping to see the princess and her father. They sang and chanted and threw flowers. But it bothered Cleopatra that she could not understand what they said.

5 Her father explained that the people of Egypt spoke Egyptian, while Cleopatra's family spoke Greek.



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6 But her father was the ruler of Egypt! Why didn't he and his family speak the native language?

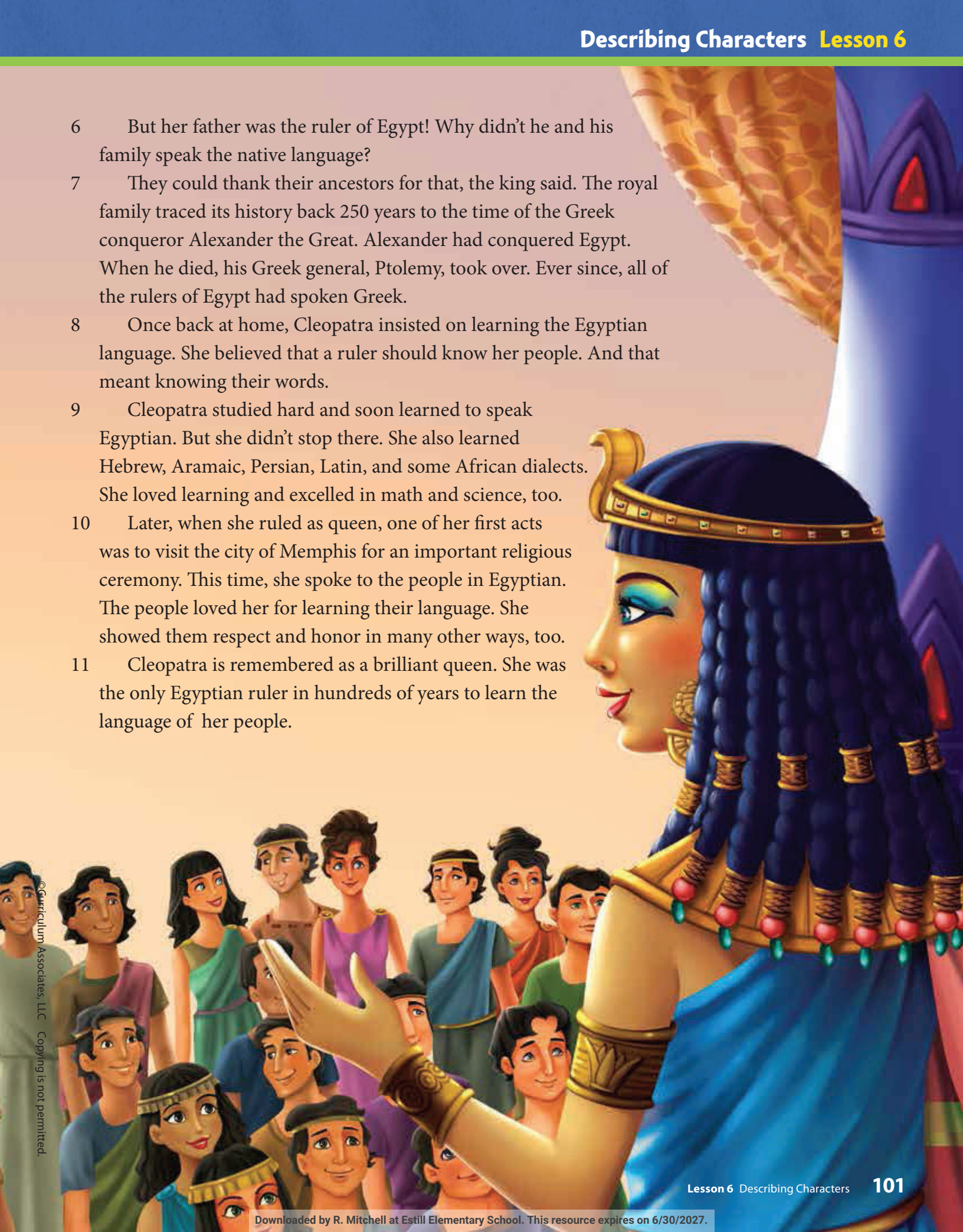
7 They could thank their ancestors for that, the king said. The royal family traced its history back 250 years to the time of the Greek conqueror Alexander the Great. Alexander had conquered Egypt. When he died, his Greek general, Ptolemy, took over. Ever since, all of the rulers of Egypt had spoken Greek.

8 Once back at home, Cleopatra insisted on learning the Egyptian language. She believed that a ruler should know her people. And that meant knowing their words.

9 Cleopatra studied hard and soon learned to speak Egyptian. But she didn't stop there. She also learned Hebrew, Aramaic, Persian, Latin, and some African dialects. She loved learning and excelled in math and science, too.

10 Later, when she ruled as queen, one of her first acts was to visit the city of Memphis for an important religious ceremony. This time, she spoke to the people in Egyptian. The people loved her for learning their language. She showed them respect and honor in many other ways, too.

11 Cleopatra is remembered as a brilliant queen. She was the only Egyptian ruler in hundreds of years to learn the language of her people.



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Think Use what you learned from reading the selection to respond to these questions.

1 This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

What does Cleopatra find out about herself after she learns to speak Egyptian?

- **A** Speaking Egyptian helps her understand her religion better.
- **B** She no longer thinks her father is a good king.
- **C** Her family's old language no longer sounds right.
- **D** She realizes she has a love for learning.

Part B

Choose **two** details from the story that support the answer to Part A.

- **A** "She also learned Hebrew, Aramaic, Persian, Latin, and some African dialects."
- **B** "They sang and chanted and threw flowers."
- **C** "But it bothered Cleopatra that she could not understand what they said."
- **D** "Ever since, all of the rulers of Egypt had spoken Greek."
- **E** "She loved learning and excelled in math and science, too."

2 Why doesn't Cleopatra's father speak Egyptian?

- **A** Rulers of Egypt had spoken Greek for 250 years.
- **B** Alexander the Great had banned the teaching of Egyptian.
- **C** The king is more interested in playing the flute than learning a new language.
- **D** Cleopatra's father and the Greek general Ptolemy had agreed not to speak Egyptian.

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3 Which sentence **best** explains why Cleopatra wants to learn to speak Egyptian?

- **A** She hopes it will help her with her studies of math and science.
- **B** She sees the love the people show for her father and for her.
- **C** Her father explains the history of her family's language.
- **D** She believes that as a ruler of Egypt, she should know Egyptian.

4 This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then answer Part B.

Part A

Which words **best** describe Cleopatra?

- **A** frightened and weak
- **B** spoiled and happy
- **C** thoughtful and caring
- **D** silly and careless

Part B

Which sentence from the story supports the answer to Part A?

- **A** "As the royal barge sailed, people crowded the banks, hoping to see the princess and her father."
- **B** "She believed that a ruler should know her people."
- **C** "She loved learning and excelled in math and science, too."
- **D** "Cleopatra is remembered as a brilliant queen."

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5 Read these sentences from paragraph 6 of the story.

> **But her father was the ruler of Egypt! Why didn't he and his family speak the native language?**

What does *native* mean in this context?

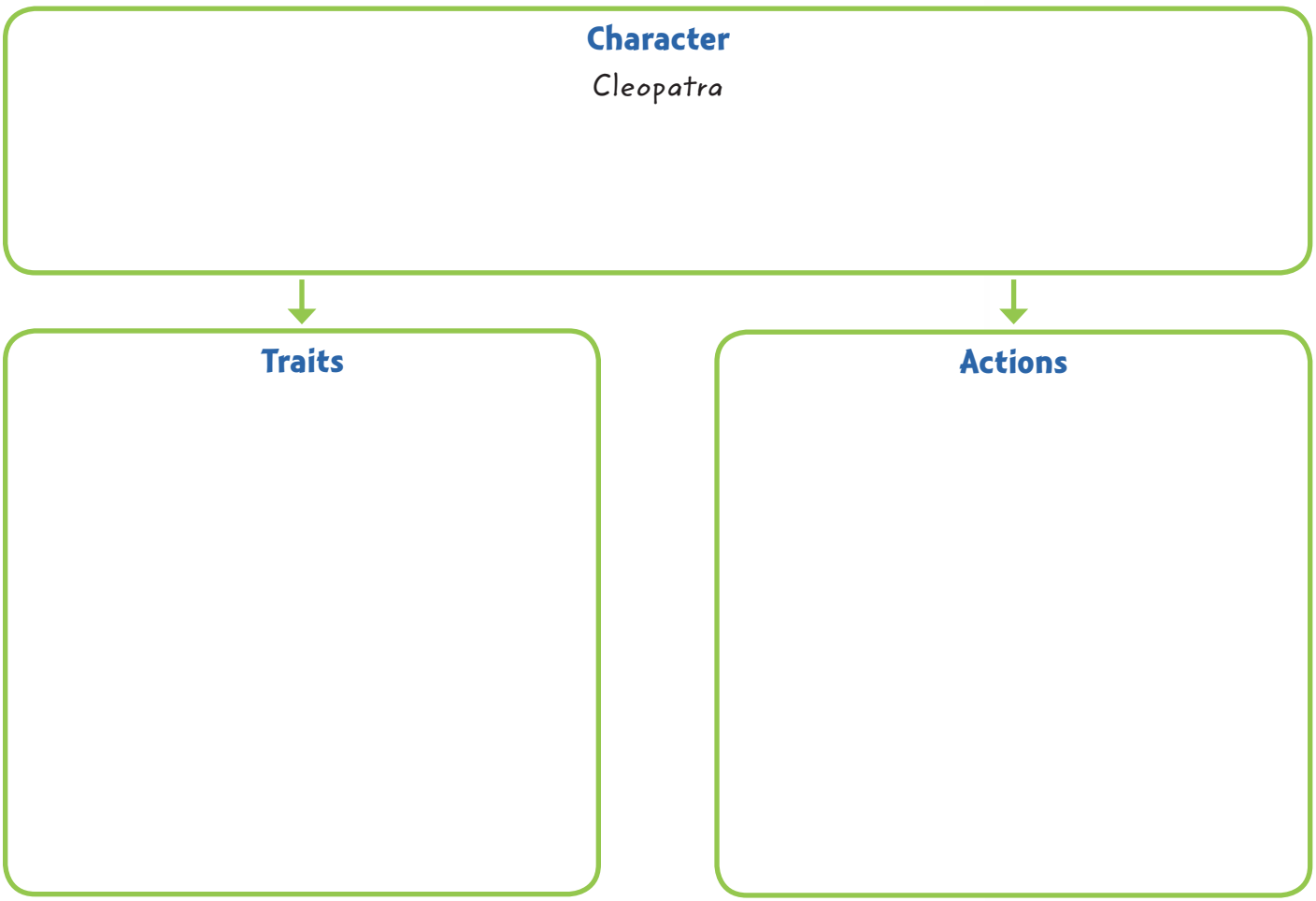
A foreign

B difficult

C local

D ancient

6 Complete the chart. Base your answers on details from the story.



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Write

7 **Short Response** The author shows that Cleopatra was a curious person. Explain how we can tell that Cleopatra was curious. Use **two** details from the story to support your response.

Learning Target

Now that you've practiced describing characters, write about how characters' actions drive what happens in a story.

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