

The Underside of the Table

Facilitator note: The skill is holding your own standard on the hidden part - the work no one will inspect - without turning it into a speech, a rebellion, or a performance of virtue. Keep the frame on craft: the caretaker is decent and his permission is honest and scoped to the finishing only - the bolts are the sheet's, done by both boys, never negotiable, and the story's split happens only after every fastener is in by the sheet; Shragi is not lazy (he accepted an honest answer from the person whose tables they are); and Elimelech's extra hours earn no applause at the barbecue - the reward is boring tables, which is exactly the design working. Do not let this become "never trust permission" (the caretaker's answer is honored as honest and later refined by him) or "hidden work is a contest" (nobody competes; Shragi and Elimelech are both right about the tops). Affirm the learnable moves: splitting the work without making anyone wrong, the sheet-not-the-wrist rule for every fastener, the three-part reasoning (hands, time, who would know). Students are not asked to disclose real experiences; Activity 7 is a fictional case.

Teacher answer key

1. The event is the single afternoon the thing is built for; the job is every load it will ever carry afterward. Hidden work belongs to the job because the event can pass on skipped finishing, but "every summer after this one" cannot - the table just holds, or it doesn't, and it does not care which side faced up while it was being built.
2. Hands: the underside is where little kids grip and trays get steadied - a rough hidden side is a splinter or a sticky patch for the hand that finds it. Time: wood drinks weather from the unfinished side, and nobody re-checks an underside, so skip-the-finishing is fine for a season and tired by the second. Third: "Tatty would know" - not from being told, but because he is the kind of man who puts his hand underneath without thinking; Elimelech admits this last only to himself because it is about whose son he is, not about tables.
3. c, b, d, a, e. The permission (c) is honest and must exist before the choice means anything; the split (b) holds his standard without making anyone wrong; the barbecue (d) is the event passing; the fall inspection (a) is the job revealing itself over time; and the stool (e) is the standard traveling to the next builder.
4. (a) Assembly is identical in both columns (every bolt, by the sheet). Finishing path: $6 \times 10 \text{ min} = 1 \text{ hour}$, no refinishing - total 1 extra hour. Skip path: $6 \text{ tables} \times 2 \text{ refinishes} \times 1 \text{ hour} = 12 \text{ hours}$. Finishing is cheaper by 11 hours before counting anything else. (b) The math leaves out what the story is really counting: a splinter in a six-year-old's hand, and a table that feels old underneath people - which never fits in a work-hours column. Steps shown.
5. The table does not know or care which side people see - it only holds or fails, on any side, under any load, whenever the load comes. The hidden part must be right the first time because

"nobody's ever going to check it": visible rough edges get noticed and smoothed; hidden rough edges wait for the hand that reaches underneath.

6. The drawing should show: the flipped first table; the seat supports and diagonal braces (the story gives no count) meeting the frame; and sixteen bolts per table, every one in by the sheet, plus the sanded, wiped finishing. Strong captions quote "a thing fails from the side you didn't do" or "Tables don't know which side faces up. They just hold, or they don't." Any honest rendering counts.

7. Sample: Reason - "The back still faces the backstage crew every night, and an unsealed back warps - by the third performance the flat can lean into the light." Sentence - "Emuna says: 'You're right that the audience won't see it - I'll do the fronts with everyone and stay for the backs on my own time, so the flats last the whole run.'" Action - "She paints the second coat on the backs after the others leave, quietly, and says nothing at the performance." All three parts, with names; wording may vary. (Case name Emuna is fictional.)

8. TABLE row 1 columns 1-5; BENCH row 2 columns 1-5; BOLTS row 3 columns 1-5; HIDDEN row 4 columns 1-6; UNDERSIDE row 5 columns 1-9; TIGHTEN row 6 columns 1-7; STEADY row 7 columns 1-6; SUMMER row 8 columns 1-6. The part nobody sees is the UNDERSIDE; how the tables held at the barbecue is STEADY - boring, which is the design working.