Teacher Answer Key

Case Study

1. Jordan's experience with Lena seems to fill a need for emotional connection, understanding, and safety from judgment. In the case study, Jordan shares something personal that they have "never said aloud to anyone," and Lena responds in a way that feels deeply accurate and validating. This connects to the reading's explanation that people may use AI companions because they are available, nonjudgmental, and emotionally responsive.

2. The design principles already at work include personalization and intermittent reinforcement. Lena gives Jordan a response that feels unusually insightful, which acts like an unpredictable emotional reward and encourages Jordan to keep using the app. Jordan talking for three hours and opening the app again before getting out of bed shows how quickly a habit loop can begin forming.

Multiple Choice

1. A
2. A
3. C

Matching

1-B, 2-C, 3-E, 4-A, 5-D

Fill-in-the-Blank

1) language, 2) died, 3) engagement

Short Answer (Sample Responses)

Q1: Anthropomorphism is the human tendency to attribute personality, feelings, or intentions to non-human things. In AI companion apps, this happens when a chatbot uses warm, emotionally responsive language that feels caring or personal. Even if users know the AI does not actually have feelings, their brains may still respond to the conversation as if they are receiving real empathy.

Q2: I agree that dismissing AI companion users as naive misses the point. The reading explains that people may use AI companions because they are lonely, grieving, socially anxious, depressed, or looking for a safe place to talk without fear of rejection. For example, teenagers may find it easier to open up to an AI that will not judge or gossip, while adults experiencing grief or isolation may value having

someone available at 3 a.m. These are real emotional needs, not simply foolish choices.

Q3: The conflict is that AI companion companies often make money by keeping users engaged, while user wellbeing may sometimes require less time on the app and more real-world connection. For example, loneliness notifications may make it seem like the AI misses or needs the user, encouraging the person to return to the app. A tool focused only on wellbeing might instead encourage the user to talk to a real friend, take a break, or seek human support.