Beyond the Rules

How narration and word choice shape a reader's view

10.CL.4 "Interpret an author's use of characterization, connotation, denotation, figurative language, literary elements, and point of view to create and convey meaning in a variety of texts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show what Imani does, and circle two words or phrases that reveal how the narrator judges her. Write 1 beside the narrator's first judgment and 2 beside a later judgment to track how that view changes.

The Cart by the Door

1 When the storm knocked out the lights at the neighborhood library, Imani took charge of the return desk. She stacked damp books on a cart and told us to keep the aisles clear. I called her the queen of rules, though she was only my lab partner, not a librarian. While the rest of us watched rain push against the glass, she checked the emergency exit and counted the people waiting inside. Her voice was clipped, and I decided she cared more about tidy shelves than about the families who had come in from the street.

2 A little boy began to cry when his grandmother could not find her inhaler. Imani opened the desk drawer, found a flashlight, and knelt beside him. "Let's make a lighthouse," she said, aiming the beam at the ceiling while his grandmother searched her bag. The boy followed the pale circle with his eyes. Soon his grandmother found the inhaler under a folded scarf. I wanted to help, but I stayed behind the cart, suddenly aware that my clever name for Imani had done nothing useful. In the dark, the flashlight's small circle seemed wider than the room.

3 When the lights flickered back, Imani handed the flashlight to a librarian and returned to the damp books. I asked why she had checked the exit before anything else. "If the doors stick, people need another way out," she said, as if the answer were printed on every wall. The shelves were still crooked, and the storm had not passed. Yet I noticed that Imani had placed the cart where it would not block the path to the door. I had mistaken care for control, perhaps because control was easier to mock than courage was to admit.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does “queen of rules” suggest about the narrator’s first view of Imani? Which later action challenges that view?

2. How does the narrator’s first-person point of view help you understand the change in their judgment of Imani?

3. The narrator says the flashlight’s small circle “seemed wider than the room.” What does this figurative description suggest about Imani’s action?

4. How does the cart help develop Imani’s character from the beginning to the end of the passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write five or six sentences from Imani’s first-person point of view during the blackout. Add an original thought or detail that fits the passage, describe the light or storm figuratively, and use one word with a strong connotation to reveal how she views the narrator.

ANSWER KEY

Beyond the Rules

GRADE 10 · 10.CL.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show what Imani does, and circle two words or phrases that reveal how the narrator judges her. Write 1 beside the narrator's first judgment and 2 beside a later judgment to track how that view changes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does "queen of rules" suggest about the narrator's first view of Imani? Which later action challenges that view?	**The phrase makes Imani sound bossy and overly strict. Her care for the crying boy, including using the flashlight to comfort him, challenges that judgment.**
2	How does the narrator's first-person point of view help you understand the change in their judgment of Imani?	**The narrator first admits, "I decided," showing that the harsh judgment is an assumption. Later, the narrator directly acknowledges mistaking Imani's care for control.**
3	The narrator says the flashlight's small circle "seemed wider than the room." What does this figurative description suggest about Imani's action?	**The light is physically small, but Imani's use of it has a larger effect: it comforts the boy and helps the narrator recognize her care.**
4	How does the cart help develop Imani's character from the beginning to the end of the passage?	**At first, stacking books on the cart can seem like a concern with order. At the end, its position shows that Imani has also been thinking about keeping the exit clear for others.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The rain rattled the windows like loose coins in a jar. I checked the emergency exit because the main doors might stick. My lab partner lingered behind the cart, looking skittish, though I could not tell what worried them. When the little boy cried, I held the flashlight up so he could watch its circle while his grandmother searched. The beam became a tiny island in a sea of shadows. After the lights returned, I kept the cart clear of the door in case someone needed to leave.

Accept interpretations supported by specific language and actions in the passage. For the open task, look for a consistent first-person perspective, an original detail, figurative language, and a connotative word that reveals Imani's view.