The Crooked Cart

Trace how a setback changes a narrator's plan.

10.CL.9.a "Write a memoir, narrative essay, or personal or fictional narrative to convey a series of events, establishing a clear purpose, using narrative techniques, and sequencing events coherently."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number three turning points in the order they happen. Underline a sentence that states the narrator's goal, and circle a detail that makes the setback vivid.

Twenty-Four Seedlings

1. At eight on Saturday, I rolled twenty-four tomato seedlings toward the school gate, determined to reach the community garden before its planting day began. I had volunteered to lead the delivery after telling Ms. Alvarez I could handle it without a team. The greenhouse door clicked shut behind me, and the damp smell of soil followed me onto the sidewalk. Halfway down the block, the cart lurched. One wheel tilted sideways, scattering three pots across the concrete. I caught the handle, but the cart stayed crooked. On my phone, the garden coordinator's message read, “We start planting at nine.”

2. I tried to drag the cart by its good side. Each scrape sent soil bouncing against the rims, and one stem bent under a fallen pot. At the corner, my classmate Nia stopped beside me with her bicycle. “Want me to call someone?” she asked. I almost said no. I could already picture Ms. Alvarez's raised eyebrows when she heard I had needed help. Then I looked at the thin green stem in my hand. I called Ms. Alvarez, explained the broken wheel, and asked if she could bring crates so we could carry the plants.

3. Ms. Alvarez met us at the corner with two empty crates. We moved the pots into them, and Nia walked ahead to hold the garden gate while I carried the lighter crate. At nine, the volunteers were still gathering; no one had lost a planting spot. I set the bent seedling beside the others and gently pressed its soil back into place. Ms. Alvarez checked the stem, then handed me a small stake. “It may need support,” she said. As I tied it upright, I thought about the work I had refused to share. The seedling was not the only thing that could stand with help.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What goal guides the narrator at the start, and how does the message on the phone add pressure?

2. How does the narrator's first attempt to move the broken cart lead to a change in approach?

3. Choose one detail from the broken-cart scene that helps you picture or hear the difficulty. What does it add to the scene?

4. How does the final image of the staked seedling connect to the narrator's decision to ask for help?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90 to 110 word first-person scene about a different small plan that goes wrong. Show a clear goal, three events in order, a moment when you change your approach, and one sensory detail that supports the scene's purpose.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number three turning points in the order they happen. Underline a sentence that states the narrator's goal, and circle a detail that makes the setback vivid. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What goal guides the narrator at the start, and how does the message on the phone add pressure?	**The narrator wants to deliver the seedlings before planting begins. The message says planting starts at nine, leaving little time to solve the problem.**
2	How does the narrator's first attempt to move the broken cart lead to a change in approach?	**Dragging the cart shakes the soil and leaves a stem bent under a pot. Seeing the damaged stem prompts the narrator to call Ms. Alvarez for help.**
3	Choose one detail from the broken-cart scene that helps you picture or hear the difficulty. What does it add to the scene?	**The cart scrapes as soil bounces against the pot rims. The sound and movement make the damage to the seedlings feel immediate.**
4	How does the final image of the staked seedling connect to the narrator's decision to ask for help?	**The stake helps the bent seedling stand, just as help from Nia and Ms. Alvarez allows the narrator to finish the delivery.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I wanted my little sister to hear her name announced at the neighborhood spelling contest, so I promised to walk her there before registration closed. At the bus stop, I found my transit card missing. I searched every pocket while the bus hissed against the curb, then watched its red lights vanish. My sister gripped her word list. I started to blame the card, but the clock on the pharmacy wall gave us twenty minutes. I asked the pharmacy clerk for directions to the library's side entrance, and we hurried through the alley. We arrived breathless, just as the volunteer opened the sign-in book.

For the markings, accept the broken wheel, the call for help, and the delivery as the three turning points. Accept other passage-supported sensory details and explanations in question 3.