More Than Space

Read how a narrator's cultural perspective shapes language and meaning.

12.CL.3 "Evaluate how an author explicitly exhibits his/her cultural perspective in developing style and meaning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline where the narrator identifies a cultural perspective, circle each use of the two competing names for the laundromat, and number the three references to making room. Use your marks to trace how the narrator's perspective shapes the story.

What the Notice Called It

1 On Saturday mornings, my grandmother and I carried our laundry down three flights to the corner shop in Queens. As a Puerto Rican kid, I learned to call that laundromat *la sala*, our living room, because the chairs held more stories than our apartment could. Mrs. Vega swapped recipes over the spin cycle; Mr. Chen folded tiny school uniforms with the care of someone wrapping a gift. Grandma said, "Make room," whenever a stranger needed a seat. I used to think she meant the plastic chair beside her. Now I think she meant the shape a neighborhood gives a person.

2 Last spring, a paper notice appeared on the glass: the building would be sold, and the laundromat would close in June. The notice called the room "commercial space." I read those two words while Grandma steadied a basket with her hip. Commercial space could be measured in square feet; *la sala* had been measured in saved seats, borrowed quarters, and names spoken correctly. At home, Grandma asked me to write down what people remembered before the machines stopped. "Make room," she said again. This time she cleared a page in her notebook, not a chair.

3 I filled that page with ordinary things: the warm coin a neighbor pressed into my palm, the slap of wet sheets against the dryer door, the way Grandma pronounced my full name when she wanted me to listen. I cannot claim that every person in the shop felt at home there. I can say why I did. In my family, making room was not a slogan for belonging; it was a habit performed in public, one chair or quarter at a time. When the sign came down, I kept the notebook. It could not keep the shop open, but it refused to let "commercial space" tell the whole story.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the narrator's stated cultural perspective affect the meaning of *la sala* when it is set against "commercial space"?

2. How does the meaning of Grandma's "Make room" change from the first paragraph to the second and third?

3. Why does the narrator describe other customers but also say, "I cannot claim that every person in the shop felt at home there"? Evaluate the effect of this choice.

4. Choose one sensory detail from the final paragraph. How does its wording support the narrator's challenge to the phrase "commercial space"?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two original sentences about a community space changing, explicitly identifying a narrator's cultural perspective. Then write two sentences evaluating how two specific language choices express that perspective and shape the scene's meaning.

ANSWER KEY

More Than Space

GRADE 12 · 12.CL.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline where the narrator identifies a cultural perspective, circle each use of the two competing names for the laundromat, and number the three references to making room. Use your marks to trace how the narrator's perspective shapes the story. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the narrator's stated cultural perspective affect the meaning of *la sala* when it is set against "commercial space"?	**The Puerto Rican narrator uses *la sala*, or "our living room," to present the laundromat as a place of family and neighborhood belonging. The notice's "commercial space" treats it only as property.**
2	How does the meaning of Grandma's "Make room" change from the first paragraph to the second and third?	**It first means offering someone a chair, then making space in a notebook for people's memories. By the end, the narrator presents it as the family's public habit of making others feel they belong.**
3	Why does the narrator describe other customers but also say, "I cannot claim that every person in the shop felt at home there"? Evaluate the effect of this choice.	**The customers show the laundromat as a shared place, while the qualification limits the narrator's claim to personal experience. This makes the cultural perspective specific rather than treating it as everyone's view.**
4	Choose one sensory detail from the final paragraph. How does its wording support the narrator's challenge to the phrase "commercial space"?	**The "warm coin a neighbor pressed into my palm" makes a borrowed quarter feel like a personal act of care. That meaning is missing from the notice's impersonal label.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

As a child in a family that celebrated Diwali, I watched the park pavilion become a storage shed, its doorway swallowing the spot where we once shared sweets after the festival. My aunt called it our second table, even when no meal stood on its benches. The phrase "second table" makes the pavilion a place of family hospitality rather than unused city property. The verb "swallowing" casts the change as a loss, showing how this narrator's family tradition affects what the building means.

Accept interpretations grounded in specific wording and linked to the narrator's stated perspective. For the open task, look for an explicit cultural perspective and an evaluation of two distinct language choices, not just a description of them.