The Last Return

How viewpoint shapes the meaning of a library closing

12.CL.4 "Evaluate an author's use of characterization, figurative language, literary elements, and point of view to create and convey meaning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Ms. Vale's actions at the two doors, circle a figurative comparison, and number two sentences that show a change in the narrator's judgment. Use your marks to consider how the narrator's point of view shapes the meaning of the closing.

The Return Slot

1 The city had scheduled our branch library to close on Friday, but on Thursday its return slot still clicked like a patient clock. I arrived carrying a cardboard box for the books nobody had claimed. Ms. Vale, who had led story hour since I could read, stood at the front door with a notice in one hand and a roll of tape in the other. She pressed the notice to the glass, then smoothed each corner twice. I thought she was making the ending look official. Inside, she asked me to leave the box empty until the last visitor had gone.

2 At noon, rain pushed through the loose frame of the upstairs side door. A boy named Eli waited there with three borrowed books against his chest; the closure notice had not yet reached his street. Ms. Vale took a folded notice upstairs and slipped it into Eli's dry backpack pocket, then held the door while he stepped away from the rain. "Bring them back when you can," she said. I wanted to tell her the city had already hired a truck. Instead, I watched her carry a stack of plastic covers down to the returns bin.

3 By closing time, the front notice had begun to peel. I reached to fix it, but Ms. Vale stopped me and placed a blank card beside the return slot. On it she had written the address of the neighborhood center, where volunteers would run a book exchange each Saturday. The city could lock this building, she told me, not the habit of showing up. I had mistaken the neat tape for surrender. Outside, Eli hurried past, his backpack tucked beneath his coat. A gust lifted the loose flap of the return slot. It clicked once more, though no one was at the door.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does Ms. Vale do at the front door and at the upstairs side door? How do both actions complicate the narrator's first judgment of her?

2. How does comparing the return slot to "a patient clock" shape the opening's meaning?

3. How does the narrator's first-person point of view lead you to revise your view of Ms. Vale?

4. Why end with the return slot clicking when no one is at the door? Explain how that detail relates to Ms. Vale's words about "the habit of showing up."

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word first-person scene from Ms. Vale's perspective. Include a private thought the narrator could not know, a new figurative comparison, and actions consistent with the passage. Then add one sentence explaining how her viewpoint changes the meaning of her careful taping.

The Last Return

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Ms. Vale's actions at the two doors, circle a figurative comparison, and number two sentences that show a change in the narrator's judgment. Use your marks to consider how the narrator's point of view shapes the meaning of the closing. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Ms. Vale do at the front door and at the upstairs side door? How do both actions complicate the narrator's first judgment of her?	**She tapes the closure notice neatly to the front door. Upstairs, she puts a folded notice in Eli's dry backpack pocket and holds the door while he moves out of the rain. Her care for Eli and his books complicates the narrator's belief that her neat taping means surrender.**
2	How does comparing the return slot to "a patient clock" shape the opening's meaning?	**The comparison makes the slot's steady clicking suggest an enduring routine, even as the scheduled closing threatens to end it.**
3	How does the narrator's first-person point of view lead you to revise your view of Ms. Vale?	**The narrator first interprets Ms. Vale's neat taping as acceptance of the closing. The narrator cannot know her plans until the card reveals the book exchange, so readers revise that judgment alongside the narrator.**
4	Why end with the return slot clicking when no one is at the door? Explain how that detail relates to Ms. Vale's words about "the habit of showing up."	**The wind causes the click, so the empty doorway acknowledges that this library is closing. Its familiar sound also recalls the routine Ms. Vale hopes the neighborhood book exchange will continue.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I pressed the notice flat because the rain could turn a warning into pulp, and people deserved to know what was happening. Each corner clung to the glass like a stubborn hand. I had asked the center for a room, but I was afraid the volunteers might not come. Upstairs, Eli kept his books close. I slipped the folded notice into his dry backpack pocket and held the door so he could move out of the rain. I could not promise him a library, only a place to return.
Her neat taping now suggests respect for readers, not surrender to the closure.

Accept interpretations that connect specific details to the narrator's changing judgment while recognizing that Ms. Vale's private thoughts remain unknown in the original passage. The sample scene is 89 words, followed by a separate explanatory sentence.