One Last Light

Read how story choices shape meaning.

7.CL.3 "Explain how the author's choice of setting, plot, characters, theme, conflict, dialogue, and point of view contribute to and/or enhance the meaning and purpose of prose and poetry, using textual evidence from the writing."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two setting details, circle one line of dialogue, and number the narrator's choice to share the lamp and the narrator's choice to play without its light. Use your marks to explain how the story creates meaning.

The Clip-On Lamp

(1) Rain hammered the windows of the community center as our open mic began. A storm knocked out the main lights, leaving only two weak emergency bulbs above the doors. The stage looked like a small island in a dark room. I held the only working clip-on lamp in the building. Its beam lit my cello music perfectly, though its batteries were nearly spent. I had practiced my solo for weeks, but the notes on the page still felt like a railing beside a steep staircase. Without them, I might stop halfway through.

(2) Beside the stage, Niko unfolded a poem covered in tiny handwriting. His turn came before mine. He glanced at the dim ceiling, then at my lamp. "I can try to read it in the hallway," he whispered, "but no one will hear me there." I remembered how his hands had shaken during rehearsal, though his poem about his grandmother had made the room fall silent. The host called his name. My fingers tightened around the lamp's metal neck, and I pictured my own blank mind in the dark.

(3) I clipped the lamp to Niko's stand. "Stay here," I said. "They came to hear you." He read slowly at first, then lifted his eyes as his voice filled the room. Just as he finished, the lamp flickered out. When my turn came, I walked onto the shadowed stage and set my music on the stand. The first note wavered. I closed my eyes, heard the next phrase in my head, and played. Outside, the rain kept tapping, but inside, someone began to clap.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. The narrator says the notes felt "like a railing beside a steep staircase." How does this comparison help you understand the narrator's conflict?

2. What does Niko's whispered line reveal about his problem, and how does it help explain the narrator's next choice?

3. How does the first-person point of view help you understand the narrator's decision? Use one detail the narrator tells you.

4. How do the narrator's actions at the end support a message about courage? Use a detail from the final paragraph.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine the open mic takes place in a different dark setting where the lamp is still needed. In four or five sentences, name your setting, quote one detail about the original setting, and explain how your change would affect the narrator's conflict and the meaning of sharing the lamp.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two setting details, circle one line of dialogue, and number the narrator's choice to share the lamp and the narrator's choice to play without its light. Use your marks to explain how the story creates meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	The narrator says the notes felt "like a railing beside a steep staircase." How does this comparison help you understand the narrator's conflict?	**The comparison shows that the notes make the narrator feel safe. Giving Niko the lamp is difficult because the narrator fears making a mistake without being able to read them.**
2	What does Niko's whispered line reveal about his problem, and how does it help explain the narrator's next choice?	**Niko can read his poem in the hallway, but the audience will not hear it. The narrator clips the lamp to his stand so he can read onstage.**
3	How does the first-person point of view help you understand the narrator's decision? Use one detail the narrator tells you.	**First person reveals the narrator's fear directly, as when the narrator pictures a "blank mind in the dark." This makes sharing the lamp a meaningful risk.**
4	How do the narrator's actions at the end support a message about courage? Use a detail from the final paragraph.	**After the lamp goes out, the narrator plays by hearing the music in their head. The wavering first note shows fear, while continuing to play shows courage.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

If the open mic took place in a noisy, unlit school gym, Niko might struggle to hold the audience's attention. In the original room, the stage looks "like a small island in a dark room," making each performer seem alone. The crowded gym would make the narrator's choice to give Niko the lamp more visible to everyone watching. Sharing it would show not only private kindness but also a willingness to support him in public.

Accept interpretations supported by specific passage details. For Part 3, the new setting must still create a need for the lamp and must change the meaning of the narrator's choice.