Behind the Curtain

Trace how a choice changes a story.

8.CL.8.a "Write narratives that establish a clear purpose, use narrative techniques, and sequence events coherently."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that names the narrator's first goal, circle the sentence where the narrator chooses to tell the truth, and number these repair steps in the order they happen: bracing, patching, and painting.

Before the Doors Open

1 Twenty minutes before the school play, I backed into the cardboard doorway we had painted all week. Its painted arch split down the middle with a sound like a zipper. Behind the curtain, actors practiced their lines while families found seats on the other side. I pressed the two edges together, but they curled away from my fingers. If I left it like that, everyone would see the damage I had caused. I grabbed a roll of tape from the prop table and glanced at the clock.

2 I tried taping the split from behind, but the doorway sagged whenever I let go. Maya, our stage manager, stepped around the curtain. "Did that just happen?" she asked. I almost blamed the loose stand. Instead, I held up the useless strip of tape and told her I had bumped the set. Maya checked the clock, then called Eli, who had built the doorway. While Eli braced the frame, I slid a scrap of cardboard across the crack. Maya taped it firmly from the back.

3 The first bell rang while I covered the front seam with leftover gray paint. My brush shook, and a thin streak landed on my shoe. Eli lifted the doorway upright and gave it a careful nudge. It stayed steady. When the curtain opened, I stood in the wings holding my breath. An actor walked through the arch, and nothing moved. I had wanted to erase my mistake before anyone noticed. Now I knew the doorway stood because I had told the truth soon enough for us to fix it together.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the narrator first want to do, and what choice changes the plan?

2. How does the comparison to a zipper help you imagine the accident?

3. How does Maya's question help move the story from the problem toward a repair?

4. Why does the writer place the first bell just before Eli tests the doorway?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 6 to 8 sentence scene about a character who accidentally damages something while preparing for an event. Show the character's first goal, a decision to ask for help, and three repair actions in a clear order; include one line of dialogue and one sensory detail.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.CL.8.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that names the narrator's first goal, circle the sentence where the narrator chooses to tell the truth, and number these repair steps in the order they happen: bracing, patching, and painting. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the narrator first want to do, and what choice changes the plan?	**The narrator wants to hide the damage before anyone notices, but chooses to tell Maya about the accident.**
2	How does the comparison to a zipper help you imagine the accident?	**It suggests a quick, sharp ripping sound as the painted arch splits.**
3	How does Maya's question help move the story from the problem toward a repair?	**Her question gives the narrator a chance to admit what happened, so Maya can call Eli to help.**
4	Why does the writer place the first bell just before Eli tests the doorway?	**The bell shows that the play is about to begin, making the test feel more urgent.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the neighborhood bake sale, Noor dropped the chalkboard sign, and its wooden leg snapped with a dry crack. She wanted to prop it against a wall and hope nobody noticed. “Can you help me fix this before people arrive?” she asked Mr. Chen. First, he lined up the broken edges. Next, Noor spread wood glue across the break while he held the pieces steady. Then they wrapped the joint with strong cord and set the sign aside to dry. When the first customer arrived, Noor used a paper price list and told the organizer what had happened.

Accept answers that connect the narrator's admission to the shared repair. For the writing task, look for a clear goal, a choice to seek help, three ordered repair actions, dialogue, and a sensory detail.