Light on the Landing

Read a story's details for both literal and figurative meaning

9-12.R2 "Read and comprehend a variety of literary texts to develop a literal and figurative understanding as appropriate to the type of text, purpose, and situation."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two actions that change how the narrator sees Mrs. Sato, and circle two figurative descriptions. Use your marks to trace the narrator's change in perspective.

The Fourth Floor

1. When the storm cut power to our building, the hallway clock froze at 8:14. I was halfway up the stairs with a bag of groceries for Mrs. Sato on the fourth floor. She usually answered my knock with a list of complaints: dripping umbrellas, muddy shoes, voices after ten. On the second-floor landing, I found a battery-powered lantern glowing beside a bowl of spare batteries. A note taped to the wall read, TAKE WHAT YOU NEED. I knew Mrs. Sato's careful block letters. I took one battery for my dim flashlight, still annoyed that she could command people even in the dark.

2. On the next landing, a boy in socks stood with his little sister, who would not take another step. Mrs. Sato came down with a second lantern and set it on the stair between them. "Watch your feet," she said, as sharply as ever. Then she walked backward up the stairs, keeping the lantern in the children's sight until they reached their own door. The boy thanked her, but she only waved him inside. I had heard that voice through the walls for months; tonight, its edges seemed less like thorns and more like the rim of a sturdy cup.

3. At the fourth floor, Mrs. Sato took the groceries and peered into the bag. "You remembered the oranges," she said, with the same voice she used to report a leaky faucet. She placed one orange in my hand and pointed to the lantern on her table. "That one stays here. The one downstairs is for anyone." I went back down slowly, carrying the orange like a small sun. The building was still dark, and the clock still read 8:14. Yet each landing held a pool of light that someone had left for a stranger.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What do the lantern and note on the second-floor landing provide literally? What do they suggest about Mrs. Sato?

2. The narrator compares Mrs. Sato's voice first to thorns and then to the rim of a sturdy cup. How does her action with the children help explain this change?

3. The narrator carries the orange "like a small sun." What is the orange literally, and what might the comparison suggest?

4. Why does the narrator mention that the clock still reads 8:14 while the landings now hold light?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence account of the stairwell encounter from the boy's point of view. Include two events from the passage, create your own figurative comparison for Mrs. Sato's help, and show what the boy understands by the end.

ANSWER KEY

Light on the Landing

GRADE 9 · 9-12.R2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two actions that change how the narrator sees Mrs. Sato, and circle two figurative descriptions. Use your marks to trace the narrator's change in perspective. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What do the lantern and note on the second-floor landing provide literally? What do they suggest about Mrs. Sato?	**They provide light and spare batteries during the outage. They suggest that Mrs. Sato has prepared to help her neighbors, even people she does not know.**
2	The narrator compares Mrs. Sato's voice first to thorns and then to the rim of a sturdy cup. How does her action with the children help explain this change?	**Her warning still sounds sharp, but she guides the frightened children safely home. The narrator begins to hear care and steadiness in her voice instead of only criticism.**
3	The narrator carries the orange "like a small sun." What is the orange literally, and what might the comparison suggest?	**It is an orange Mrs. Sato gives the narrator. The comparison suggests warmth or a bright spot in the dark after her unexpected kindness.**
4	Why does the narrator mention that the clock still reads 8:14 while the landings now hold light?	**The outage has not ended, but the narrator's view of the building has changed. The lights left for others make it feel less lonely.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

My sister stopped on the landing and refused to take another step. Mrs. Sato set a lantern between us and walked backward until we reached our door. To me, its light was a handrail stretched across the dark. I thanked her, but she just waved us inside. I knew then that her sharp warning to watch our feet was her way of keeping us safe.

Accept interpretations supported by the passage's actions and images. For Part 3, look for five sentences, two accurate events, an original figurative comparison, and an inference consistent with the boy's experience.