The Crooked Sign

Trace how choices and details shape a personal narrative.

9.CL.9.a "Write a memoir, narrative essay, or personal or fictional narrative to convey a series of events, establishing a clear purpose and using narrative techniques."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number three events that move the narrator from making a mistake to repairing it, underline dialogue that moves the action forward, and circle a detail that creates time pressure.

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1 On Thursday afternoon, I carried our bake sale sign into the gym, holding it above my head so the paint would not brush my jacket. The blue letters announced SATURDAY in a shape as wide as the doorway. Then Mara, who had organized the sale, stopped beside me. "The sale is Friday," she said. For a moment, the squeak of sneakers on the court seemed louder than her voice. I had copied the date from an old flyer. The doors would open in less than an hour for the basketball game, when hundreds of people might see the sign.

2 I wanted to roll the sign up and say nothing. Instead, I told Mara where I had found the date. She pressed her lips together, then pulled a thick marker from her bag. "We can fix this if we hurry." We spread the paper across a bench, but the marker turned muddy against the wet blue paint. A patch of white printer paper looked like a bandage. I checked the clock, cut a clean strip from the back of a spare poster, and wrote FRIDAY across it while Mara found tape.

3 When we hung the repaired sign, the new strip sat crooked over the old word. I stepped back, ready to apologize again, but a parent walking into the gym read it aloud and asked where the sale would be. Mara gave her the room number. By the next morning, three parents had brought extra cookies, and our table was crowded before the first bell. I still noticed the crooked strip each time someone passed. It reminded me that admitting a mistake had not erased it, but it had given us time to do something useful.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the narrator want readers to understand about admitting a mistake? Use the ending to support your answer.

2. How does the narrator's response to the wrong date change from the first paragraph to the second?

3. How does Mara's line, "We can fix this if we hurry," move the events forward?

4. How do the basketball game and the clock make the sign repair feel urgent?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph of 80 to 105 words about a real or invented moment when a plan failed. Show a beginning, a choice, and an outcome, and include one line of dialogue, a sensory detail, and a final reflection on why asking for help mattered.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number three events that move the narrator from making a mistake to repairing it, underline dialogue that moves the action forward, and circle a detail that creates time pressure. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the narrator want readers to understand about admitting a mistake? Use the ending to support your answer.	**Admitting a mistake does not undo it, but it leaves time to act. The crooked strip remains visible even though the corrected sign helps people find the sale.**
2	How does the narrator's response to the wrong date change from the first paragraph to the second?	**At first, the narrator freezes when Mara points out the error. In the second paragraph, the narrator resists hiding the sign, admits where the date came from, and helps correct it.**
3	How does Mara's line, "We can fix this if we hurry," move the events forward?	**Her words turn the conversation from identifying the mistake to fixing it. She and the narrator then work together on a new date.**
4	How do the basketball game and the clock make the sign repair feel urgent?	**The gym doors will open in less than an hour, so many people could see the wrong date. The narrator checks the clock while making the replacement strip.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I had promised to bring the music for our dance rehearsal, but my phone died on the bus. At the studio, I kept tapping its black screen as everyone waited. "Tell us what happened," Nia said. My cheeks burned, but I admitted I had forgotten to charge it. Nia offered her phone, and I asked the group to hum the opening beat while we searched for the song. We started ten minutes late, yet no one had to go home. I learned that asking for help takes less time than pretending I have everything under control.

Accept different marked events if they show a logical progression from error to repair. For the writing task, look for a clear purpose conveyed through the sequence of events, dialogue, a sensory detail, and reflection.