Signals in the Rain

Trace how setting, sequence, and character choices build tension.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3 "Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that establish the setting, number the major actions in the order they occur, and circle details that reveal Mara's or Eli's choices. Use your marks to see how the author builds the problem and its solution.

The Station Bell

1 At dusk, Mara stood beneath the glass roof of the abandoned train station, listening to rain strike the panes. The town's power had failed, and the station's old signal lamp was the only light beside the flooded river. Mara carried a brass key that her grandfather had given her that morning, saying it opened "the door that matters when the water rises." She did not know what door he meant. Across the tracks, the evacuation bell hung silent. Then, from the locked signal tower, she heard three slow knocks.

2 Mara crossed the slippery tracks and found a narrow door at the tower's base. Her key turned, but the door opened only a hand's width before something heavy stopped it. She pushed until her shoulder ached. Inside, a metal cabinet had fallen against the door. Instead of calling for help, Mara slipped through the gap and climbed the dark stairs. On the top landing, she found the bell rope cut cleanly in two. A flashlight flashed below her. Eli, her younger cousin, had followed her from the shelter, carrying a coil of fishing line.

3 Eli looped the fishing line around the broken rope while Mara searched the cabinet. Behind its fallen back panel, she found a rusted wheel connected to the station's emergency bell. Her grandfather's words suddenly made sense. Mara turned the wheel, but it would not move. Eli braced the cabinet away from the door, giving her room to pull harder. The bell began to ring across the river. In the shelter, people answered with shouts and lanterns. Only after the sound spread through town did Mara notice the water climbing the station steps.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does placing the action in an abandoned station beside a flooded river shape the problem Mara faces? Use two details from the passage.

2. Why might the author have Mara hear the knocks before identifying Eli? Explain the effect on tension and on Mara's character.

3. What is the impact of introducing Eli with fishing line after Mara discovers that the bell rope is cut?

4. How does the author's choice to reveal the grandfather's words before Mara finds the wheel affect the ending?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Rewrite the final moment in exactly three sentences. Have Eli arrive at the top landing before Mara turns the wheel, and show how this changed action order affects Mara's actions and the tone.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that establish the setting, number the major actions in the order they occur, and circle details that reveal Mara's or Eli's choices. Use your marks to see how the author builds the problem and its solution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does placing the action in an abandoned station beside a flooded river shape the problem Mara faces? Use two details from the passage.	**The isolated, dark station makes communication difficult, and the flooded river makes the emergency urgent. The silent evacuation bell and failed town power increase the danger.**
2	Why might the author have Mara hear the knocks before identifying Eli? Explain the effect on tension and on Mara's character.	**The unknown knocks create suspense. Delaying Eli's introduction also shows Mara acting bravely and independently before help appears.**
3	What is the impact of introducing Eli with fishing line after Mara discovers that the bell rope is cut?	**The order makes the cut rope seem like a serious obstacle first, then makes Eli's fishing line a useful solution. It shifts the action from Mara working alone to the cousins cooperating.**
4	How does the author's choice to reveal the grandfather's words before Mara finds the wheel affect the ending?	**The words begin as a mystery and become meaningful when Mara finds the wheel connected to the emergency bell. This sequence shows that her grandfather prepared her for the crisis and makes her realization important.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Eli reached the top landing before Mara touched the rusted wheel, and he held the cabinet away from the door. With room to move, Mara turned the wheel while Eli tied the fishing line to the cut rope. The bell rang sooner, making the station feel less lonely and the rescue feel more certain.

Accept responses that accurately analyze how the station setting, delayed information, action order, or character introductions shape tension, conflict, and resolution. For the open task, accept any exactly three-sentence revision in which Eli arrives before Mara turns the wheel and the changed sequence has a clear effect.