Words Under Glass

Trace how imagery and connotation shape a literary scene.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4 "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline at least four words or phrases whose meanings reach beyond the literal. In the margin, number your strongest two and write one or two words naming the feeling each creates.

The Exhibit Case

1. On a rainy October afternoon, Maya unlocked the display case in the school library. Inside lay facsimiles of pages by William Shakespeare and Langston Hughes, arranged beneath a brass lamp. Shakespeare's page carried a line from All's Well That Ends Well: "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." Nearby, Hughes asked, "What happens to a dream deferred?" The two excerpts seemed to lean toward one another across four centuries. Beyond the windows, rain stitched thin lines down the glass, turning the football field into a blurred, silver square.

2. Maya did not read the labels first. She watched a drop of water travel down the window, gather two smaller drops, and break apart at the sill. The movement echoed the words on the pages, though Maya could not yet say why. She copied mingled yarn and dream deferred into her notebook, leaving wide spaces beneath both lines. Outside, a bus sighed at the curb, then dragged itself away through the wet street. In the library, the brass lamp made a small island of light around the case.

3. At the bottom of the case, Maya found a card written by a former student. It described the exhibit as a "harbor for restless words." Maya circled harbor and drew a question mark beside it. A gust shook rain from the oak near the parking lot. Its branches scraped the outer wall, then settled. She looked again at the field. Under the evening sky, it had become dark slate, and the window held the room's reflection like a second, wavering library. Maya finally read the labels, but she kept looking at the words instead of past them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In Shakespeare's phrase "mingled yarn," what does yarn mean, and how does the web and yarn imagery shape the idea of life?

2. What does deferred most likely mean in Hughes's question, and how does the unanswered question affect the mood?

3. How does the phrase "rain stitched thin lines down the glass" shape the reader's image of the rain?

4. What is the literal meaning of harbor, and what figurative meaning does it have in "a harbor for restless words"? How does that word choice affect the tone?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly two sentences describing an ordinary school place. Use one word with both a literal and figurative possibility, then explain its intended meaning and the tone it creates.

ANSWER KEY

Words Under Glass

HIGH SCHOOL · RL.11-12.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline at least four words or phrases whose meanings reach beyond the literal. In the margin, number your strongest two and write one or two words naming the feeling each creates. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In Shakespeare's phrase "mingled yarn," what does yarn mean, and how does the web and yarn imagery shape the idea of life?	**Yarn means thread. The web and yarn imagery compares life to interwoven strands, suggesting that good and ill are mixed together.**
2	What does deferred most likely mean in Hughes's question, and how does the unanswered question affect the mood?	**Deferred means put off or postponed. The unanswered question creates an uneasy, expectant mood because the dream's outcome is unknown.**
3	How does the phrase "rain stitched thin lines down the glass" shape the reader's image of the rain?	**It compares the rain to stitches, making the falling drops seem narrow, connected, and carefully patterned on the window.**
4	What is the literal meaning of harbor, and what figurative meaning does it have in "a harbor for restless words"? How does that word choice affect the tone?	**Literally, a harbor is a sheltered place for ships. Figuratively, it suggests that the exhibit gives unsettled words a place of refuge, creating a protective, thoughtful tone.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At dismissal, the hallway became a river, carrying backpacks and voices toward the doors. River suggests a fast, crowded flow rather than actual water, creating an energetic, slightly overwhelming tone.

Accept well-supported interpretations of figurative language and connotation when students cite or clearly refer to the passage. For the open task, accept varied word choices if the response has exactly two sentences and explains both meaning and tone.