

The Choice Crossing

Analyze how a model narrative develops a decision through sequence and detail.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3 "Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that reveal Mara's feelings, circle two sensory details, and number four key events in chronological order. Notice how these choices build a sequenced narrative.

Across the Sound

- ① At 5:40 a.m., Mara stood alone on the ferry deck as the boat cut across Puget Sound. Rain tapped her hood, and the city behind her blurred into gray windows. In her backpack, an envelope held the acceptance letter for a summer marine-biology program, unopened since Tuesday. She had told everyone she wanted the program. Still, as the ferry horn groaned, she pictured six weeks away from her little brother and the familiar clatter of their kitchen. She pressed the envelope flat against the rail, as if the wind might carry her decision away.
- ② When the ferry reached Friday Harbor, Mara followed the other passengers down the ramp. Her aunt waited beside a dented blue truck, waving a thermos above her head. "You look like you swallowed a storm," Aunt Celia said. Mara almost laughed, but the sound caught in her throat. During the drive to the laboratory, cedar branches slapped the truck windows. Mara watched them flash past, then pulled out the envelope. "What if I am not ready?" she asked. Her aunt kept her eyes on the narrow road. "You do not have to feel ready to begin," she said.
- ③ At the laboratory, a researcher handed Mara a clipboard and pointed toward tide pools shining below the bluff. Mara tucked the envelope into her pocket. First, she counted purple sea stars clinging to the rocks. Next, she measured the water temperature while gulls argued overhead. The work was smaller and stranger than the brave future she had imagined, yet each observation gave her something solid to do. At noon, she opened the letter. The program began in June, and her name was printed at the top. Mara called her brother from the bluff. "I said yes," she told him, hearing the ferry horn answer across the water.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 Quote one sensory detail from paragraph 1. How does it help establish Mara's mood or situation?

2 What happens immediately after Mara arrives at Friday Harbor, and how does that event move the narrative forward?

3 How does Aunt Celia's dialogue affect Mara's next actions?

4 How does the final mention of the ferry horn work as an ending detail?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a 180–220 word narrative in three paragraphs about a moment when you must act despite uncertainty. Use a clear beginning, middle, and ending, at least two sensory details, one line of dialogue, and a final detail that shows how the experience changed you.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two details that reveal Mara's feelings, circle two sensory details, and number four key events in chronological order. Notice how these choices build a sequenced narrative. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Quote one sensory detail from paragraph 1. How does it help establish Mara's mood or situation?	"Rain tapped her hood" helps create a cold, isolated mood as Mara faces an uncertain decision.
2	What happens immediately after Mara arrives at Friday Harbor, and how does that event move the narrative forward?	Mara follows the passengers down the ramp and meets Aunt Celia, moving the action from the ferry to the drive toward the laboratory.
3	How does Aunt Celia's dialogue affect Mara's next actions?	Aunt Celia tells Mara that she does not have to feel ready to begin, and Mara later starts working at the laboratory and opens the letter.
4	How does the final mention of the ferry horn work as an ending detail?	It connects to the horn in the opening, but now Mara has made her decision, showing her change from uncertainty to commitment.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

By seven o'clock, the auditorium smelled of dust and warm stage lights. I stood behind the curtain, rubbing my note card while the moderator introduced the final round. My partner, Jalen, had lost his voice that morning and sat in the front row. We had prepared for weeks, but now the opening statement belonged to me. Beyond the curtain, chairs scraped, then the room settled into a silence larger than the audience. When my name was called, I stepped into the white circle of light. The timer flashed red, and my first sentence came out thin. Then I saw Jalen tap two fingers against his notebook, our signal to slow down. I took a breath. "Our town needs buses that run after the library closes," I said. I described students waiting in rain, parents leaving work early, and empty streets after dark. The words on my card stopped trembling. After the bell, the judges disappeared behind a side door. Jalen met me near the exit. "You carried us," he whispered. I had nearly run away, but I had stayed. A judge returned with a silver certificate. We had placed second. Outside, cold air filled my lungs. The next round would come soon. I would still be nervous, but I would recognize the first step: walk through the curtain.

For Part 3, accept narratives of 180–220 words in three paragraphs that use an ordered event sequence, concrete sensory details, dialogue, and an ending that reflects a change or realization. Students may use real or imagined experiences and may organize events differently from the sample.