The Meaning Kept

Trace how a narrative ending resolves events and reveals insight.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3e "Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details in the final paragraph that show how the narrator changed, and circle the final sentence that explains the larger meaning of the experience.

Voices at the Depot

1 On the morning our town library reopened its recording studio, I arrived carrying a notebook full of questions for Mr. Alvarez, a retired rail worker. My history class had promised to collect local stories before the old depot became apartments. Yet the studio's microphone produced only a thin hiss, and Mr. Alvarez watched me twist cables with a patient expression. I considered canceling. Instead, I asked if he would walk with me to the depot, where I could record his voice on my phone. He nodded, tucked his cap under his arm, and led us through the rain.

2 At the depot, Mr. Alvarez pointed to a faded timetable bolted beside the entrance. When he was sixteen, he explained, he had swept platforms after school and memorized departures because passengers often asked him for help. A freight train's whistle interrupted him, not from the tracks, which had been removed years ago, but from a recording he played on his small radio. The sound made him laugh, then pause. He said the depot mattered because it held ordinary people together for a few minutes before they scattered. I stopped worrying about polished audio and began asking about the faces he remembered.

3 Back at school, I listened to the interview while rain tapped the classroom windows. Mr. Alvarez's voice rose and softened around names that would never appear in a textbook. I edited out the long silences at first, then restored several of them, realizing that his pauses carried the weight of what the depot had lost. When our class posted the recording on the library website, I sent him the link. He replied with one sentence: “Now they will know we were here.” The broken microphone had pushed me outside, but the detour taught me that preserving a place means preserving the people who gave it meaning.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which problem from the opening paragraph does the final sentence refer to, and how did that problem lead to the narrator's insight?

2. What change in the narrator's choices shows a new understanding of the interview's purpose?

3. How does Mr. Alvarez's reply, “Now they will know we were here,” support the conclusion?

4. Why does the final sentence work as a conclusion rather than simply another event in the story?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence conclusion to a narrative in which you and your cousin repair a neglected trail sign after getting lost on the trail. Show what you do at the end, then reflect on what the experience changed or taught you.

ANSWER KEY

The Meaning Kept

HIGH SCHOOL · W.11-12.3e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details in the final paragraph that show how the narrator changed, and circle the final sentence that explains the larger meaning of the experience. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which problem from the opening paragraph does the final sentence refer to, and how did that problem lead to the narrator's insight?	**The broken microphone forced the narrator to record at the depot, where the narrator learned that the people connected to a place give it meaning.**
2	What change in the narrator's choices shows a new understanding of the interview's purpose?	**The narrator stops focusing on polished audio and restores some of Mr. Alvarez's silences because they communicate the depot's loss.**
3	How does Mr. Alvarez's reply, "Now they will know we were here," support the conclusion?	**His reply shows that posting the recording preserves the memories of the ordinary people connected to the depot.**
4	Why does the final sentence work as a conclusion rather than simply another event in the story?	**It reflects on the resolved recording project and states the larger lesson the narrator gained from the detour.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

By late afternoon, we had replaced the crooked arrow and added a small map at the fork where we had wandered in circles. On our next hike, a family stopped to read it, then headed down the right path without hesitation. Watching them, I understood that a useful repair can begin with the mistake that makes you notice what others need.

Accept responses that identify both resolution and reflection, using relevant details from the passage. For Part 3, accept varied conclusions if they contain exactly three sentences, resolve the trail-sign situation, and state a meaningful reflection.