Tension in Motion

Track how a narrative builds a tense moment through craft choices.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.3b "Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline sensory details, circle each spoken sentence, and number the moments when the pace becomes faster or slower. Notice how these choices reveal the narrator's feelings and develop the event.

Seedlings in the Rain

1 On Saturday morning, I carried a tray of tomato seedlings to the school garden. Clouds pressed low over the playground, and the soil smelled dark and sharp after rain. Ms. Ortiz pointed toward an empty bed. "Set them there before the storm returns," she said. I nodded, but my hands tightened around the tray. Last spring, I had snapped two stems while rushing. This time, I wanted every plant to survive under my care today.

2 A cold drop landed on my wrist. Then another tapped the leaves. "Move!" called Jay from the tool shed. We lifted the tray together and hurried across the slick path. My shoe slid, and the seedlings tipped toward the ground. I caught the edge with one hand, held my breath, and took one careful step. The quick dash suddenly became slow, silent work. At the bed, Jay steadied the tray while I lowered it into the shelter of the wooden frame.

3 Rain drummed on the frame for ten minutes, then softened to a whisper. When we returned the seedlings to the bed, each stem stood upright, shining with drops. Ms. Ortiz inspected them and smiled. "You slowed down at the right moment," she said. I looked at the muddy print on my shoe and laughed. I had thought careful work meant never making a mistake. Now I understood that it could also mean noticing danger, asking for help, and choosing the next step wisely.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the descriptions of the clouds and soil in paragraph 1 help develop the setting and the narrator's feelings?

2. How does Jay's dialogue, “Move!” affect the pacing in paragraph 2?

3. What sentence directly signals a change in pacing in paragraph 2? What new pace does it create?

4. What does the narrator learn in the final reflection, and how does that reflection develop the narrator's character?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 110 to 140 word narrative about a small problem during a group task. Use at least two lines of dialogue, one sensory detail, a clear shift from quick to slow pacing, and a final sentence of reflection.

ANSWER KEY

Tension in Motion

GRADE 8 · W.8.3b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline sensory details, circle each spoken sentence, and number the moments when the pace becomes faster or slower. Notice how these choices reveal the narrator's feelings and develop the event. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the descriptions of the clouds and soil in paragraph 1 help develop the setting and the narrator's feelings?	**The low clouds and rain-soaked soil establish an approaching storm, while the narrator's tightened hands show worry about protecting the seedlings.**
2	How does Jay's dialogue, "Move!" affect the pacing in paragraph 2?	**His urgent command speeds up the action and begins the rushed trip across the path.**
3	What sentence directly signals a change in pacing in paragraph 2? What new pace does it create?	**"The quick dash suddenly became slow, silent work." It changes the pace from hurried movement to careful, tense action.**
4	What does the narrator learn in the final reflection, and how does that reflection develop the narrator's character?	**The narrator learns that being careful includes noticing danger, asking for help, and making wise choices. This shows growth from fearing mistakes to responding thoughtfully.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

During art club, I carried a cardboard model of our bridge toward the display table. The hallway smelled of wet coats, and wind rattled the windows. "The judges are here," Malik said. We rushed around the corner, holding the model between us. A loose panel lifted. "Stop," I said. The hallway seemed to shrink as we lowered the bridge to the floor. Instead of running, we checked each folded tab, pressed new tape into place, and carried it with both hands. When we reached the table, the panel stayed firm. I learned that hurrying toward a deadline can create a bigger problem than taking a minute to protect the work carefully.

Accept answers that connect specific dialogue, description, pacing, or reflection to event development or characterization. For the narrative, accept varied situations if the response meets the word count and includes all listed techniques.