

Storm Signal

Track how a model narrative builds tension through connected events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3b "Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline every line of dialogue, circle two sensory details, and put a star beside Nia's reflection. Number each shift between the balloon launch and the bus emergency to see how the techniques build tension and character.

Above the Greenhouse

- ① At 4:12, Nia stood behind the school greenhouse, tightening the knot beneath a weather balloon. The vinyl skin shone silver against a bruised April sky, and cold rain tapped her safety goggles. Across the field, her brother Eli waited beside the emergency radio they had borrowed from the science room. "The wind is climbing," he called. Nia checked the handheld gauge. If the balloon rose too soon, their air-quality sensor could vanish over the river. She remembered promising Ms. Chen that the data would be ready for Saturday's town meeting.
- ② Inside the greenhouse, the sensor's screen flashed a red battery symbol. Nia's fingers paused over the launch cord. At the same moment, Eli's radio crackled from the field: "A bus is stuck near the creek. The driver says water is crossing the road." Nia could run the spare battery to Eli, who could send the alert to the office, or she could release the balloon before the storm strengthened. The seconds seemed to stretch between raindrops. She snapped the new battery into place, then shouted, "Eli, radio the office. I'll hold the balloon."
- ③ Eli's reply came quickly: "Office notified. The bus is turning around." Nia exhaled, surprised by how long she had held her breath. She loosened the cord, and the balloon lifted with a soft pull, carrying the sensor above the greenhouse roof. Below, Eli splashed toward the covered walkway, one hand protecting the radio. Nia watched the balloon become a pale dot, then looked at the dark creek beyond the baseball field. The launch data mattered, she thought, but it mattered because people would use it to make safer choices. When the wind finally eased, she and Eli walked back inside together.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How do the descriptions of the sky and rain at the beginning create a mood for the launch?

2 How do Eli's radio message about the bus and the sentence "The seconds seemed to stretch between raindrops" build tension?

3 What are the two plot lines in the passage, and how does Nia connect them?

4 What does Nia's reflection about the launch data reveal about her character?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 130-160 word scene with two connected plot lines. Include dialogue, at least one sensory detail, a reflection by a character, and a brief sentence or fragment that speeds up the pacing.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline every line of dialogue, circle two sensory details, and put a star beside Nia's reflection. Number each shift between the balloon launch and the bus emergency to see how the techniques build tension and character. 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 sky and rain at the beginning create a mood for the launch?	The “bruised April sky” and cold rain create a threatening, stormy mood that makes the launch feel risky.
2	How do Eli's radio message about the bus and the sentence “The seconds seemed to stretch between raindrops” build tension?	The bus message adds an urgent safety problem, and the stretched-seconds sentence slows the moment while Nia must choose what to do.
3	What are the two plot lines in the passage, and how does Nia connect them?	One plot line follows the balloon launch, and the other follows the bus near the flooded creek. Nia puts in the battery and tells Eli to alert the office while she holds the balloon.
4	What does Nia's reflection about the launch data reveal about her character?	It reveals that Nia values using science to help people make safer choices, not simply completing the launch.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

By six o'clock, Jordan had one hand on the robotics cart and one eye on the rain-dark window. In the auditorium, the team's robot waited for its final test; outside, his sister Mae was selling tickets alone for the flood-relief concert. “The charger is missing,” Priya said, searching beneath the tables. Jordan smelled wet wool from the coats piled by the door and heard the first audience members arriving. He could keep hunting, or carry the spare charger from Mae's ticket table. Fast now. Jordan ran downstairs, where Mae counted crumpled bills. “Take it,” she said, pushing the charger toward him. As he raced back, Jordan realized neither project mattered much if he treated people as obstacles. The robot started, and later he returned to help Mae greet the crowd.

Accept equivalent explanations that cite accurate details from the passage and connect a technique to tension, events, or character development. For the writing task, check for both plot lines and all required narrative techniques within the stated word range.