Rain at Closing

Notice how pacing shapes suspense and relief in a narrative scene.

ELA.10.C.1.2 "Write narratives using an appropriate pace to create tension, mood, and/or tone."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details that slow the action, circle two short sentences, and put a star beside the place where the action begins moving faster. These choices show how the writer controls tension and mood.

The Locked Library

1 At 8:47 p.m., Mara locked the small coastal library and stepped into the rain. The parking lot was empty except for her bicycle, tipped against the fence. Wind pushed the gate open, then shut it with a hard click. Mara checked her phone. No signal. She laughed once, quietly, and started toward the bike. Halfway there, she heard a sound from inside the library, a slow scrape across the wooden floor. She stopped. The key ring felt cold in her hand. Behind her, the dark windows reflected only rain.

2 Mara did not turn around. She listened. Rain tapped the metal book-return slot. A branch dragged along the roof, paused, and dragged again. The scrape inside came once more, closer to the front desk. Mara took one step toward the door. Then another. Her shoe slid on wet pavement. She caught herself against the wall and held her breath. Through the glass, the lobby looked still. The checkout counter, the poster rack, the blue rug, all of it sat in dim emergency light. Then a book fell somewhere beyond the desk.

3 Mara raised the key but did not use it. Instead, she pressed her ear to the door. A faint whimper answered. She unlocked the door and hurried through the lobby. Near the desk, a gray kitten struggled inside a toppled donation box. Mara lifted the box, and the kitten sprinted beneath a chair. For a moment, she stood laughing in the quiet building. Then she found a paper cup, coaxed the kitten out with a soft click of her tongue, and carried it into the rain. The gate swung behind them, no longer sounding like a warning.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does Mara do just before she hears the scrape in paragraph 1, and how does this sequence slow the pace?

2. How do the short sentences "Mara did not turn around. She listened." affect the pace and mood of paragraph 2?

3. Why does the writer list the checkout counter, poster rack, and blue rug before the book falls?

4. How does the pace change in paragraph 3 after Mara hears the whimper? Use one detail from the paragraph in your answer.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 110 to 140-word scene in which an ordinary wait becomes tense because of an unexplained sound or movement. During the tense moment, use at least three sentences of six words or fewer to slow the pace, then end with a quick action that changes or resolves the tension.

ANSWER KEY

Rain at Closing

GRADE 10 · ELA.10.C.1.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three details that slow the action, circle two short sentences, and put a star beside the place where the action begins moving faster. These choices show how the writer controls tension and mood. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Mara do just before she hears the scrape in paragraph 1, and how does this sequence slow the pace?	**She checks her phone, finds no signal, laughs quietly, and starts toward her bike. These small actions delay the scrape and build unease.**
2	How do the short sentences "Mara did not turn around. She listened." affect the pace and mood of paragraph 2?	**They pause the action and make the reader wait with Mara, creating suspense.**
3	Why does the writer list the checkout counter, poster rack, and blue rug before the book falls?	**The detailed list slows the moment and makes the quiet lobby feel tense before the sudden sound.**
4	How does the pace change in paragraph 3 after Mara hears the whimper? Use one detail from the paragraph in your answer.	**The pace becomes faster as Mara acts, shown when she unlocks the door, hurries through the lobby, and lifts the box. The faster action shifts the mood from fear to relief.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Jonah reached the bus stop two minutes before the last route was due. The street was nearly empty, and water gathered in the cracked curb. Across the road, the pharmacy sign blinked, went dark, blinked again. He checked the schedule. 9:15. He checked his phone. 9:17. A low engine sound rolled around the corner, then faded. Jonah stepped closer to the curb. Behind the shelter, something knocked twice against the plastic wall. He froze. The knocking came again, faster now. Jonah turned and found a loose campaign sign snapping in the wind. At that moment, headlights washed over the wet street. The bus pulled up, its doors folding open with a warm hiss. Jonah climbed aboard, laughing at his soaked shoes.

Accept answers that accurately identify pacing choices and explain their effect on tension, mood, or tone with passage evidence. For the writing task, check for 110 to 140 words, at least three short sentences during the tense moment, and a clear pace shift near the ending.