Mirrors of Vale

Trace figurative language and uncover an allegorical message.

ELA.11.R.3.1 "Analyze the author's use of figurative language and explain examples of allegory."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three examples of figurative language, circle two details that may work as symbols, and write a short margin note explaining what each circled detail may represent.

The Faces We Turn

1 At dawn, every resident of Vale carried a polished mirror to the central square. The mirrors hung from their necks like small moons, catching the sun and turning each face bright. By law, people had to hold the glass outward whenever they spoke. The mayor said the mirrors kept conversation clean, because no one could hide a stain in full light. Yet Mara noticed that the mirrors showed only what stood directly before them. Behind each speaker, the river had thinned to a thread, and the hills wore a brown, thirsty haze. No mirror faced that way.

2 One afternoon, Mara brought a bucket of river water to the square. It smelled of iron and carried a dead fish against its rim. She asked the council why the river was failing, but the mayor lifted his mirror between them. "Speak to the reflection," he ordered. In its surface, the bucket became a silver bowl, the fish a dark comma floating in a flawless sky. The crowd praised the mayor's calm image. Mara felt anger rise in her chest, a trapped bird beating its wings. She turned her mirror toward the hills, and several neighbors gasped at the haze they had practiced not seeing.

3 That evening, Mara covered her mirror with river mud and walked house to house. Some residents shut their doors, fearing they would be fined for carrying an unclean glass. Others touched the mud, then looked beyond it. They saw cracked fields, empty nets, and children filling cups from a shrinking stream. By morning, mirrors lay face down across the square. The mayor called the sight disorder, but Mara called it a beginning. Without the bright surfaces commanding their attention, the residents joined to clear waste from the river and demand new laws. Their first honest conversation began with dirty hands.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the simile comparing the mirrors to “small moons” suggest about the mirrors at the start of the passage? Explain how this description supports the story’s meaning.

2. Analyze the description of the bucket in the mayor’s mirror. How does changing it into a “silver bowl” with a “flawless sky” reveal the mayor’s response to the river crisis?

3. In the allegory, what do the outward-facing mirrors represent? Use one detail from the passage to support your answer.

4. What do the mud-covered mirrors and the face-down mirrors symbolize? Explain the message created by the residents’ actions.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 100-130-word allegorical scene about a community problem. Use one recurring symbol and at least two examples of figurative language, then end with one sentence that explains what the symbol represents and what message the scene suggests.

ANSWER KEY

Mirrors of Vale

GRADE 11 · ELA.11.R.3.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three examples of figurative language, circle two details that may work as symbols, and write a short margin note explaining what each circled detail may represent. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the simile comparing the mirrors to "small moons" suggest about the mirrors at the start of the passage? Explain how this description supports the story's meaning.	**The simile makes the mirrors seem bright, attractive, and powerful. It supports the idea that pleasing appearances can distract people from serious problems.**
2	Analyze the description of the bucket in the mayor's mirror. How does changing it into a "silver bowl" with a "flawless sky" reveal the mayor's response to the river crisis?	**The mayor makes pollution appear beautiful and harmless. The imagery shows that he avoids the crisis by controlling how people see it.**
3	In the allegory, what do the outward-facing mirrors represent? Use one detail from the passage to support your answer.	**They represent a social habit or system that values approved appearances over difficult truth. The law requiring people to hold mirrors outward shows that residents are trained to focus only on what is directly in front of them.**
4	What do the mud-covered mirrors and the face-down mirrors symbolize? Explain the message created by the residents' actions.	**They symbolize rejecting false appearances and choosing to face reality. The actions suggest that honest recognition of a shared problem can lead people to act together.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In Harbor Row, every shop gave customers a blue ribbon with each purchase. People tied the ribbons to their wrists, proud of the color that proved they had chosen the quickest delivery. Soon the gutters streamed blue after rain, and the harbor waves chewed ribbons into bright foam. Lena gathered a fistful and placed them on the council table. "They are only scraps," a merchant said, while the pile climbed like a tide around his shoes. That night, residents cut their ribbons and began carrying baskets to the market. The blue ribbons represent convenient habits that create waste, and the scene suggests that small personal choices can damage a shared environment.

Accept interpretations that identify a symbol, connect it to a larger social issue, and support the claim with details from the passage. For the open task, accept varied community problems if the recurring symbol, figurative language, and stated allegorical message are clear.