

Closing Time Voices

Track perspective shifts and the theme they create.

ELA.12.C.1.2 "Write complex narratives using appropriate techniques to establish multiple perspectives and convey universal themes."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase in each paragraph that reveals a character's perspective, then circle each mention of the blue library card. Number three details that build a shared human idea across the scene.

The Last Library Card

- ① At 6:40, I stood outside the floodlit library with the cardboard archive box pressed to my coat. The council had voted to close the branch, and I had come to collect my grandmother's papers before the movers arrived. Through the glass, Mr. Bell, the librarian, was stacking chairs with deliberate slowness. I remembered him teaching me to use the microfilm reader when I was ten. Now every scrape of a chair sounded like a door shutting. Still, I told myself, papers are only papers. Buildings are only buildings.
- ② From behind the circulation desk, Mr. Bell watched Maya hold the box as if it contained a living animal. He wanted to tell her that he had argued against the closure, but the meeting minutes would not change the leaking roof or the council's arithmetic. For thirty years, he had learned patrons' losses by the books they returned: divorce guides, hospice memoirs, college catalogs. Maya's grandmother had checked out local newspapers every Tuesday. Mr. Bell set one final blue library card on the desk. It was useless now, yet he could not throw it away. To him, the branch was not a building. It was evidence that strangers could belong to one another.
- ③ When Mr. Bell slid the blue card toward me, I almost laughed. My grandmother had been dead for six months, and no card could summon her back. Then I saw her name, written in the small, sharp letters she used on birthday checks. Mr. Bell did not speak. Perhaps he understood that grief dislikes being explained. I placed the card inside the archive box, then lifted a stack of chairs beside him. Outside, the movers' truck coughed at the curb. Inside, we worked until the room looked bare, except for the table where two strangers had chosen not to leave each other alone.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 How does Maya's view of the library in paragraph 1 differ from Mr. Bell's view in paragraph 2? Use one detail for each perspective.

- 2 Which detail shows how Mr. Bell has come to understand patrons' private struggles, and how does that detail shape his perspective?

- 3 How does the meaning of the blue library card change from paragraph 2 to paragraph 3?

- 4 What universal theme does the final image of Maya and Mr. Bell working together develop? Explain with one detail from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a 180- to 220-word scene about a small loss or mistake. Use two distinct perspectives, make a clear shift between them, and repeat one concrete object that helps convey a universal theme through the characters' actions.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase in each paragraph that reveals a character's perspective, then circle each mention of the blue library card. Number three details that build a shared human idea across the scene. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Maya's view of the library in paragraph 1 differ from Mr. Bell's view in paragraph 2? Use one detail for each perspective.	Maya initially tries to dismiss the library as "only" papers and a building, though its closing hurts her. Mr. Bell sees it as proof that strangers can belong to one another.
2	Which detail shows how Mr. Bell has come to understand patrons' private struggles, and how does that detail shape his perspective?	He recognizes losses through returned books such as divorce guides, hospice memoirs, and college catalogs. This makes him see the library as a place connected to people's lives and losses.
3	How does the meaning of the blue library card change from paragraph 2 to paragraph 3?	For Mr. Bell, it is a useless item he cannot discard because it represents the library's relationships. For Maya, it becomes a personal connection to her grandmother through her handwriting.
4	What universal theme does the final image of Maya and Mr. Bell working together develop? Explain with one detail from the passage.	Human connection can ease loss. Although the library is closing, Maya and Mr. Bell choose to work together rather than leave each other alone.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Leah found the red glove under the last seat of the city bus. It was child-sized, damp at the fingertips, and stitched with a silver star. She held it up as passengers filed past. No one looked back. Her own daughter had lost gloves all winter, then insisted she was old enough to keep track of them. Leah tucked this one into her pocket, telling herself it was only cloth. At the terminal, Tomas searched the empty bus for his sister's glove. He had promised their mother he would watch Nia after school, but he had stopped to trade baseball cards. Nia's bare hand was hidden inside his coat sleeve. When the driver said the bus would leave again in two minutes, Tomas felt the promise grow heavier than the backpack on his shoulders. Leah saw the boy running beside the platform and recognized the fierce, embarrassed look he wore. She stepped down, held out the glove, and watched Nia pull it on. Tomas whispered thanks, though his eyes stayed on the pavement. Leah did not lecture him. As the bus doors folded shut, she touched the empty pocket in her coat and thought of calling her daughter, not to warn her, but to ask about her day.

Accept supported interpretations of each character's perspective and of the theme. For the writing task, look for two clearly differentiated viewpoints, an intentional perspective shift, a recurring object, and a theme conveyed through details and actions.