Signals of Change

Trace how character change, imagery, and structure shape theme.

ELA.12.R.1 "Reading Prose and Poetry"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details that show how Venn's work protected other people. Number 1, 2, and 3 beside the places that reveal Mara's changing view of the signal room, so you can trace how the passage develops its ideas.

Inventory

1. At dawn, Mara unlocked the shuttered signal room beneath the old harbor bridge. The city had replaced its brass levers with an automated control box years earlier, but demolition crews would arrive Monday, and her supervisor had asked her to inventory anything worth saving. Salt filmed the windows. On a shelf, Mara found the logbooks of Elias Venn, the last operator, whose neat entries recorded fog, tide, and the names of ships delayed safely. She photographed the pages quickly. To her, the room was a relic, useful only if its parts could be recycled.

2. Near noon, a ferry horn sounded twice, low and impatient, beyond the pilings. Mara opened a drawer beneath the switchboard and found a folded letter addressed to the bridge engineer. Venn had written after a winter outage, explaining that he kept the manual levers polished because machines failed when storms cut power. He did not praise himself. Instead, he listed three captains who had waited rather than risk the channel. Mara looked at the dark metal box outside and imagined its screen going blank. The logbooks no longer seemed like clutter, but evidence of decisions made for people he would never meet.

3. On Monday, Mara gave her supervisor two lists. First, she recommended recycling the corroded fixtures. Then she proposed preserving the logbooks and one lever in the new transit museum, where commuters could turn it beside a map of the harbor. Her supervisor hesitated over the cost. Mara pointed to a final entry Venn had written during a blackout: "Held traffic until the bell buoy answered." The sentence showed that the lever was not a souvenir, but a record of careful judgment. The supervisor signed the proposal. As workers removed the room's walls, Mara carried the books into daylight, aware that progress could erase a tool without erasing the responsibility it represented.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Mara's view of the signal room change from paragraph 1 to paragraph 3? Use one detail from each paragraph.

2. Why is Venn's letter a turning point for Mara? Explain what the letter reveals and how she responds to it.

3. What is the effect of the automated control box and its imagined blank screen? Explain how this image contributes to a theme of the passage.

4. How does Mara's final decision to recycle some fixtures but preserve the logbooks and lever develop the passage's central idea?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence literary analysis that identifies two connected themes in the passage. Explain how at least two specific details develop the relationship between those themes.

ANSWER KEY

Signals of Change

GRADE 12 · ELA.12.R.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three details that show how Venn's work protected other people. Number 1, 2, and 3 beside the places that reveal Mara's changing view of the signal room, so you can trace how the passage develops its ideas. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Mara's view of the signal room change from paragraph 1 to paragraph 3? Use one detail from each paragraph.	**At first, Mara sees the room as a relic whose parts should be recycled. By paragraph 3, she sees the logbooks and lever as evidence of responsible judgment and proposes preserving them.**
2	Why is Venn's letter a turning point for Mara? Explain what the letter reveals and how she responds to it.	**The letter reveals that Venn maintained the manual levers because automated systems could fail during storms, and that captains waited to avoid danger. Mara begins to see the records as proof of choices that protected people.**
3	What is the effect of the automated control box and its imagined blank screen? Explain how this image contributes to a theme of the passage.	**The image emphasizes that newer technology can fail. It supports the theme that progress still requires human judgment and knowledge gained from earlier work.**
4	How does Mara's final decision to recycle some fixtures but preserve the logbooks and lever develop the passage's central idea?	**Her decision shows that accepting change does not require discarding everything from the past. She preserves the objects that represent safety, memory, and responsible decision-making.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

One theme is that progress is strongest when it preserves hard-won knowledge. Another is that technology cannot replace human responsibility, shown when Venn maintains the manual levers during outages. By saving the logbooks and lever while recycling the fixtures, Mara joins these ideas: she accepts change but protects the judgment that makes change safer.

Accept reasonable theme claims that are supported by accurate details from the passage. For the open task, look for two connected ideas, at least two relevant details, and an explanation of how the details develop those ideas.