Clues in the Valley

Notice how figurative language shapes mood and meaning.

ELA.5.R.3.1 "Analyze how figurative language contributes to meaning in text(s)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four phrases that create a nonliteral picture. Number them 1 to 4, then write a few words in the margin telling what each phrase helps you understand or feel.

Morning Watch

(1) Before sunrise, Maya climbed the wooden steps of the fire lookout with her grandfather. The valley below was a dark bowl holding sleeping trees. Cold air nipped her cheeks, and the railings wore beads of dew. Grandfather handed Maya binoculars. "We watch for smoke," he said. "A small wisp can be a warning bell." Maya scanned the hills as the first light spilled over the ridge.

(2) Then a thin gray line rose beyond Pine Creek. It curled like a question mark above the pines. Maya's stomach became a tight knot, but she kept looking. The radio crackled, and Grandfather reported the smoke to the ranger station. Soon, an engine growled on the road below. The lookout, quiet all morning, seemed to hold its breath while crews checked the area.

(3) By noon, the smoke was gone. A cooking fire at a campsite had been put out safely. Maya watched sunlight dance across the creek and felt her fear loosen. Grandfather smiled. "The forest speaks in clues," he said. "Our job is to listen." As they climbed down, the valley no longer looked like a dark bowl. It was a wide green map, bright with paths and possibilities.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What picture and feeling does the phrase “a dark bowl holding sleeping trees” create at the beginning of the passage?

2. What does the simile “It curled like a question mark” suggest about the smoke?

3. How does saying that the lookout “seemed to hold its breath” add to the meaning of paragraph 2?

4. How does the description of the valley change from “a dark bowl” to “a wide green map”? What does this change show about Maya’s feelings?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write three sentences about a natural place changing from a worrying moment to a calm moment. Include one simile and one example of personification. In a fourth sentence, explain how one figurative phrase helps readers understand the change.

ANSWER KEY

Clues in the Valley

GRADE 5 · ELA.5.R.3.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four phrases that create a nonliteral picture. Number them 1 to 4, then write a few words in the margin telling what each phrase helps you understand or feel. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What picture and feeling does the phrase "a dark bowl holding sleeping trees" create at the beginning of the passage?	**It makes the valley seem dark, enclosed, and very quiet before sunrise.**
2	What does the simile "It curled like a question mark" suggest about the smoke?	**The smoke is thin and twisting, and its cause is uncertain or concerning.**
3	How does saying that the lookout "seemed to hold its breath" add to the meaning of paragraph 2?	**It makes the lookout seem silent and tense while Maya and her grandfather wait for news.**
4	How does the description of the valley change from "a dark bowl" to "a wide green map"? What does this change show about Maya's feelings?	**The valley changes from seeming dark and closed-in to bright and full of possibilities. It shows that Maya's fear has changed to relief and hope.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Storm clouds crowded the beach like a wall, and the wind tugged at Lena's hat. When the rain stopped, the sun peeked through, and the waves whispered against the shore. Lena's worry drifted away as the beach turned silver and calm. The phrase "the waves whispered" makes the shore feel gentle, showing that Lena is no longer afraid.

Accept reasonable explanations that connect a figurative phrase to a picture, feeling, mood, or change in meaning. For the open response, check that the student uses a simile, personification, and an explanation of the effect of one phrase.