When Darkness Speaks

Notice how figurative language shapes a scene's mood and message.

ELA.6.R.3.1 "Explain how figurative language contributes to tone and meaning in text(s)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each example of figurative language in the passage, then number the examples in the order you find them. In the margin, write a tone word beside each underlined example.

The Night the Lights Went Out

1 On the evening the town's lights flickered out, Maya stood on her apartment balcony and watched the street change. The usual traffic noise sank away, and darkness poured between the buildings like ink. Across the block, windows blinked with candles and flashlights. Maya's little brother clutched the railing, but she pointed upward. Without the glow of signs, the sky opened wide. Stars, usually hidden behind the city's bright mask, appeared one by one. The blackout turned the familiar block into an unknown shore.

2 Then a neighbor rolled a battery radio onto the sidewalk. Its thin music floated through the warm air, a small boat crossing a silent sea. People carried chairs outside, and the building's brick walls seemed to listen. Someone shared peaches from a cooler. Someone else told a joke that bounced from porch to porch. Maya noticed that the dark no longer felt like a locked door. It felt like a blanket pulled around the block, drawing strangers close enough to speak.

3 Near midnight, the power returned with a sudden hum. Lamps snapped on, and televisions began chattering behind closed windows. For a moment, the light seemed too sharp, like a shout in a quiet room. Maya looked at the stars fading above the rooftops. The block was becoming its usual self again, busy and separate. Yet she could still hear her neighbors talking as they gathered their chairs. The brief darkness had planted a tiny lantern in her mind, a memory that made her feel less alone in the crowded city.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the phrase “darkness poured between the buildings like ink” contribute to the tone at the beginning of the passage?

2. How does the meaning of the darkness change when Maya says it first felt like “a locked door” and later felt like “a blanket”?

3. What effect does the personification in “the building’s brick walls seemed to listen” have on the scene’s tone?

4. What does the “tiny lantern in her mind” mean, and how does this metaphor shape the ending’s tone?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence scene about a familiar place changed by weather or darkness. Use two examples of figurative language, then state how one example creates a tone and adds meaning.

ANSWER KEY

When Darkness Speaks

GRADE 6 · ELA.6.R.3.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each example of figurative language in the passage, then number the examples in the order you find them. In the margin, write a tone word beside each underlined example. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the phrase "darkness poured between the buildings like ink" contribute to the tone at the beginning of the passage?	**It creates a dark, uncertain tone by making the darkness seem to spread and cover the street.**
2	How does the meaning of the darkness change when Maya says it first felt like "a locked door" and later felt like "a blanket"?	**At first, darkness represents something isolating and frightening. Later, it represents warmth, comfort, and community.**
3	What effect does the personification in "the building's brick walls seemed to listen" have on the scene's tone?	**It makes the setting feel quiet and attentive, adding to the peaceful feeling of neighbors gathering together.**
4	What does the "tiny lantern in her mind" mean, and how does this metaphor shape the ending's tone?	**It means Maya keeps a hopeful memory of feeling connected to her neighbors. The metaphor creates a warm, reflective tone.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Rain tapped the library windows like impatient fingers, while the empty shelves held their breath. The room felt secret and watchful, as if the storm had turned it into a hiding place. The personification of the shelves creates a suspenseful tone and shows that the quiet library feels alive and unusual.

Accept reasonable figurative-language choices if students explain how the language affects both tone and meaning. Tone words may vary when supported with details from the passage.