The Greenhouse Key

Track how a narrator's point of view shapes what readers believe.

ELA.7.R.1.3 "Explain the influence of narrator(s), including unreliable narrator(s), and/or shifts in point of view in a literary text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Lena's statements about what happened, circle details that make you doubt her, and write 1 beside the place where the narrator changes.

The Missing Key

1. When the bell rang for dismissal, I was the last student in the school greenhouse. Mr. Vale had asked me to lock the glass door after watering the seedlings, a job I always do perfectly. I remember setting his brass key on the hook beside the potting bench. Then I hurried home, though I may have paused to admire the red backpack near the door. The next morning, the key was missing, and everyone looked at me as if I collected keys for fun.

2. I told Mr. Vale that I had no reason to touch the backpack, especially since I had never seen it before. He pointed to a streak of wet soil on its zipper, matching the mud from my boots. That did not prove anything. People track mud everywhere. When he opened the backpack, the brass key lay inside a side pocket, but I explained that someone must have borrowed my boots and planted it there. Mr. Vale said nothing. His quiet look made the greenhouse feel smaller than before.

3. Later that day, I, Mr. Vale, watched the security video with the principal. In it, Lena lifted the key from the hook and slipped it into the red backpack before leaving. She never noticed that the camera faced the potting bench. I did not tell her about the video during our talk because I wanted to hear her account. Her words changed each time she explained the mud, the backpack, and the key. By the end, I was less interested in punishment than in why she feared telling the truth.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Who narrates the first two paragraphs, and who narrates the third paragraph?

2. What are two details that show Lena may be an unreliable narrator?

3. How does Lena's point of view influence what the reader may think before the narrator changes?

4. How does Mr. Vale's point of view change the reader's understanding of Lena's story?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences about a missing object. Sentences 1 and 2 must be told by a first-person narrator who gives an account that later proves unreliable. Sentences 3 and 4 must shift to a second narrator, who supplies one detail that changes the reader's understanding.

ANSWER KEY

The Greenhouse Key

GRADE 7 · ELA.7.R.1.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline Lena's statements about what happened, circle details that make you doubt her, and write 1 beside the place where the narrator changes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Who narrates the first two paragraphs, and who narrates the third paragraph?	**Lena narrates the first two paragraphs. Mr. Vale narrates the third paragraph.**
2	What are two details that show Lena may be an unreliable narrator?	**Lena says she put the key on the hook and had never seen the backpack, but the security video shows her putting the key into the backpack.**
3	How does Lena's point of view influence what the reader may think before the narrator changes?	**Her point of view may lead the reader to question the evidence and think someone else may have planted the key.**
4	How does Mr. Vale's point of view change the reader's understanding of Lena's story?	**Mr. Vale's view confirms that Lena took the key and shows that her changing explanations were not truthful.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I returned the library tablet to its charging cart before lunch, so I could not know why it vanished. I only looked inside my jacket pocket because my own calculator was missing. I, Ms. Chen, reviewed the hallway camera and saw Theo slide the tablet into his jacket. I realized that his nervous search was meant to make the class think the tablet had disappeared on its own.

Accept answers that identify the shift from Lena to Mr. Vale and explain how the video makes Lena's account unreliable. For the open task, accept varied situations if the first narrator's account is contradicted by the second narrator's detail.