River of Change

Trace imagery and symbols as a character faces change.

ELA.8.R.3.1 "Analyze how figurative language contributes to meaning and explain examples of symbolism in text(s)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each phrase that uses words beyond their literal meaning. Circle the words "oar lock" each time they appear, then write S beside each circle to track the object's symbolic role.

The Blue Oar Lock

1. On the morning of the town's annual river cleanup, Maya unlocked the community boathouse before sunrise. Her grandfather had taught her to row there, but he had moved away after his illness worsened. On a shelf, she found his old blue oar lock, a metal clip that held an oar in place. She slipped it into her pocket. Outside, fog lay over the water like a thin blanket, and the dock boards groaned beneath her shoes.

2. At the riverbank, Maya joined volunteers pulling bottles and tangled fishing line from the reeds. The work felt endless, a knot that tightened each time she filled another bag. When a younger boy struggled to lift a wet tire, Maya handed him the blue oar lock and showed him how to hook it to a rope. Together they dragged the tire ashore. The clip flashed in the sun, a small blue spark against the muddy shore, and Maya heard her grandfather's patient voice in her memory.

3. After the cleanup, Maya returned the oar lock to the boathouse shelf. Then she paused and carried it back to the dock, where she fastened it to a spare oar. The river no longer looked like a locked door. Its current moved forward, carrying leaves, branches, and a bright strip of sky. Maya rowed once across the inlet and back. She knew the oar lock could not bring her grandfather home, yet it helped her hold steady while she moved into a changed life.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What mood does the comparison of fog to "a thin blanket" create? Explain how the comparison builds that mood.

2. What does Maya mean when she describes the cleanup work as "a knot that tightened" each time she filled a bag?

3. What does the oar lock symbolize for Maya? Use two details from the passage to support your answer.

4. How does the metaphor of the river as "a locked door" connect to the ending of the passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly three sentences about an object that could symbolize an important change in a character's life. Include one simile or metaphor, and explain what the object symbolizes and how the figurative language adds meaning.

ANSWER KEY

River of Change

GRADE 8 · ELA.8.R.3.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each phrase that uses words beyond their literal meaning. Circle the words "oar lock" each time they appear, then write S beside each circle to track the object's symbolic role. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What mood does the comparison of fog to "a thin blanket" create? Explain how the comparison builds that mood.	**It creates a quiet, covered, slightly heavy mood. The blanket comparison makes the fog seem as if it gently covers the river.**
2	What does Maya mean when she describes the cleanup work as "a knot that tightened" each time she filled a bag?	**She means the work feels difficult and overwhelming, as though the problem becomes more complicated or burdensome as she keeps working.**
3	What does the oar lock symbolize for Maya? Use two details from the passage to support your answer.	**The oar lock symbolizes Maya's connection to her grandfather and her ability to keep moving through change. He taught her to row, she uses the lock to help the boy, and it helps her "hold steady" after he has moved away.**
4	How does the metaphor of the river as "a locked door" connect to the ending of the passage?	**At first, the locked door suggests Maya feels blocked by loss and change. By the end, the moving current and her rowing show that she is beginning to move forward.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After moving to a new apartment, I kept my old house key on a string above my desk. It was a small silver anchor, reminding me that my memories could steady me even when everything around me changed. The key symbolizes my connection to my old home, while the anchor metaphor shows that the connection gives me stability.

Accept equivalent explanations of the figurative language when students connect each phrase to a supported mood, idea, or character experience. For Part 3, accept varied objects and meanings if the response has exactly three sentences, includes figurative language, and explains both symbolism and meaning.