The Waiting Mitten

Trace how recurring details shape mood, character, and meaning.

ELA.9.R.1.1 "Explain how key elements enhance or add layers of meaning and/or style in a literary text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that reveal Mara's feelings, circle each mention of the mitten or clock, and number the repeated details in the order they appear. Use your marks to notice how setting, objects, and sounds build meaning.

Before the Library Opens

1 At dawn, Mara unlocked the town library before the streetlights clicked off. Rain tapped the tall windows, turning Main Street into a blurred ribbon of silver. On the returns desk sat a red wool mitten, still damp at the thumb. Mara lifted it carefully and placed it beside the lost-and-found box. Her father had worn the other mitten on his last walk to the hospital, and she had not spoken about that walk since winter. When the front bell rang, Mara quickly straightened a stack of maps and called, "We're open."

2 Mr. Ibarra, the building's caretaker, entered carrying a toolbox and a dripping umbrella. "That mitten has been waiting longer than I have," he said. Mara almost smiled, but she tucked her hands into her coat pockets. Mr. Ibarra moved through the reading room, tightening a loose hinge, then paused beneath the clock. Its second hand jerked forward, stopped, and jerked again. Tick. Silence. Tick. Mara watched him set a small screw on the table. "Some things need time before they can work," he said, though he seemed to be speaking to the clock. Outside, a bus sighed away from the curb.

3 Near closing, Mara found a note tucked inside the mitten: "Meet me where the stories begin." The handwriting belonged to her younger brother, Leo, who had left for his evening shift without saying goodbye. Mara carried the mitten past the shelves until she reached the children's corner, where Leo used to wait while their father chose mystery novels. A cardboard castle stood there, its paper towers bent but upright. Behind it, Leo had placed the matching mitten and a photograph of their father laughing in the snow. Mara pressed both mittens together. The clock ticked steadily above her as she finally let herself cry.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the rainy library setting in paragraph 1 add to the mood and reveal Mara's emotional state?

2. Explain how the mitten gains meaning from the beginning to the end of the passage.

3. How do the broken clock's sounds, "Tick. Silence. Tick.," and Mr. Ibarra's comment add a layer of meaning?

4. What does the cardboard castle, described as "bent but upright," suggest about the family's situation? Explain how this detail enhances the ending.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence scene in which a repeated object and one setting detail reveal a character's unspoken feeling. Then add one sentence explaining how the object and setting detail add meaning or style.

ANSWER KEY

The Waiting Mitten

GRADE 9 · ELA.9.R.1.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that reveal Mara's feelings, circle each mention of the mitten or clock, and number the repeated details in the order they appear. Use your marks to notice how setting, objects, and sounds build meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the rainy library setting in paragraph 1 add to the mood and reveal Mara's emotional state?	**The quiet rain and blurred silver street create a subdued, lonely mood that reflects Mara's unspoken grief about her father.**
2	Explain how the mitten gains meaning from the beginning to the end of the passage.	**At first, the mitten represents Mara's painful memory of her father. By the end, the matching mitten and photograph also represent family connection and help Mara begin to release her grief.**
3	How do the broken clock's sounds, "Tick. Silence. Tick.," and Mr. Ibarra's comment add a layer of meaning?	**The interrupted ticking creates a pause-filled style and compares the clock's need for repair with Mara's need for time to process her loss.**
4	What does the cardboard castle, described as "bent but upright," suggest about the family's situation? Explain how this detail enhances the ending.	**The castle suggests that the family has been hurt by loss but remains able to endure. It adds a note of resilience and hope before Mara accepts comfort from Leo's gesture.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After practice, Nia found her blue keychain hanging from the fence beside the empty soccer field. Wind pushed dry leaves across the chalky sideline, but she did not reach for the keychain. She remembered giving its twin to her best friend before their argument. When the stadium lights blinked on, Nia slipped the keychain into her pocket and walked home. The keychain represents Nia's damaged friendship, while the lonely field and fading light create a quiet, regretful style.

Accept responses that connect a specific literary element to its effect on meaning, mood, characterization, or style. For Part 3, accept varied objects and settings when the explanation clearly connects both details to the character's feeling.