The Gate Decision

Analyze how narrative techniques shape a character's choice.

10.T.T.1.a "Evaluate how narrative techniques (including archetypes, multiple perspectives, plot structure, and symbolism) interact, using textual evidence. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details about Mara's changing role, circle repeated objects that may carry meaning, and number each shift between Mara's and Eli's perspectives. Use your marks to evaluate how the techniques work together.

Before the Water Rose

1 By dusk, rain had turned the river road into a brown current. Mara stood at the locked floodgate with a brass key clenched in her fist. Her grandfather, the gatekeeper, had collapsed at home that morning, leaving her his warning: "Open the gate before the river reaches the school." Mara had always followed others; now neighbors watched from porches as she hesitated. Above the gate, a cracked blue lantern swung in the wind. Its weak light made the rising water look like moving glass and sharpened her fear.

2 Eli, Mara's younger brother, saw the lantern differently. From the school roof, where he had carried sandbags with their neighbors, its blue flash looked like a signal, not a warning. He believed Mara could open the gate because Grandfather had taught her the wheel's stiff turns, though she had never tried them alone. When he shouted across the water, Mara heard only fragments: "You know how!" To her, his voice sounded like pressure from someone who did not understand her fear. She remembered Grandfather's steady hands guiding hers and noticed the key had warmed inside her palm.

3 At the final turn, Mara fit the key into the rusted lock. The lantern's blue flame went out, and darkness hid the water for one breath. Then Eli's voice came again, clearer: "Turn it left!" Mara turned the wheel until the gate groaned open. The current rushed through the channel beside the school instead of toward it. By dawn, the lantern lay broken on the stones, but sunlight struck the brass key on Mara's neck. Eli later said his sister had looked like Grandfather at the gate. Mara knew she had not become him. She had chosen to act while afraid.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Mara fit a reluctant-hero archetype at the beginning? Give two details that suggest she can still take on the challenge.

2. Compare Mara's and Eli's views of the blue lantern. How does their difference increase the tension before Mara acts?

3. Trace the plot from Mara's hesitation to the gate's opening. How do the key and lantern help mark her change at the climax?

4. How does the ending use both the plot resolution and the comparison to Grandfather to distinguish Mara's heroism from simply copying him?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In 5 to 7 sentences, evaluate how at least three narrative techniques, including an archetype, multiple perspectives, plot structure, or symbolism, work together to show Mara's change. Cite at least three specific details from the passage, including one from Eli's perspective and one about a symbol.

ANSWER KEY

The Gate Decision

GRADE 10 · 10.T.T.1.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details about Mara's changing role, circle repeated objects that may carry meaning, and number each shift between Mara's and Eli's perspectives. Use your marks to evaluate how the techniques work together. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Mara fit a reluctant-hero archetype at the beginning? Give two details that suggest she can still take on the challenge.	**Mara is reluctant because she hesitates and has "always followed others." She may be capable because she holds Grandfather's key and has learned the wheel's turns from him.**
2	Compare Mara's and Eli's views of the blue lantern. How does their difference increase the tension before Mara acts?	**Mara sees the lantern's weak light as part of a frightening scene, while Eli sees its flash as a hopeful signal. Their different views show that Mara feels fear while Eli believes she can act, increasing pressure around her decision.**
3	Trace the plot from Mara's hesitation to the gate's opening. How do the key and lantern help mark her change at the climax?	**Mara first hesitates with the key while the lantern's weak light heightens her fear. At the climax, the lantern goes out and Mara uses the key to open the gate, showing that she acts despite uncertainty.**
4	How does the ending use both the plot resolution and the comparison to Grandfather to distinguish Mara's heroism from simply copying him?	**The resolution shows Mara saves the school by opening the gate. Although Eli says she looks like Grandfather, Mara says she did not become him, showing that her heroism comes from making her own brave choice.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mara begins as a reluctant-hero figure because she “had always followed others” and hesitates at the locked gate. The rising action uses her perspective to make Eli's call sound like pressure, while Eli sees the blue lantern as a hopeful signal. This contrast shows that Mara's fear, not a lack of ability, blocks her. At the climax, the lantern goes dark as Mara finally uses the warm brass key and turns the wheel. The broken lantern at dawn suggests the fearful warning has lost its power, while the key on Mara's neck symbolizes responsibility she accepts. The resolution confirms her independent heroism because she says she did not become Grandfather but chose to act while afraid.

Accept interpretations that connect at least three techniques to Mara's change and support each claim with accurate passage details. For the open response, students must use Eli's perspective and explain the meaning of at least one symbol.