Key After Rain

Analyze how an author builds suspense through purposeful craft choices.

10.T.T.1.b "Evaluate and critique how plot structures, conflict, narrative devices, word choice, and other craft techniques are impacted by an author's purpose. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three words or phrases that create suspense, circle two details that limit what Mara and the reader know, and number three plot events that raise the danger. These marks will help you see how craft choices make you question whether Mara should continue.

The Library Key

1 At 6:12, Mara stood outside the closed library with a brass key warming in her fist. The key had arrived that morning in an envelope marked RETURN BEFORE RAIN. A storm pressed against the town, turning the streetlights into blurred coins. Mara wanted to call her brother, who had been missing since noon, but the note carried his handwriting. From inside, a book cart rolled across the floor with a slow, deliberate scrape. She lifted the key toward the lock, yet paused when her phone flashed: UNKNOWN CALLER. WAIT.

2 She answered, and only rain hissed through the speaker. Then a whisper said, "Do not open the front door." Mara slipped around the building to the narrow service entrance, where the lock waited beneath a broken security light. Her brother knew that entrance; he had shown it to her years earlier while they hid overdue comics from their mother. Yet the warning made every choice feel watched. When she turned the key, the door opened inward, revealing a dry hallway and a line of wet footprints leading downstairs.

3 At the bottom step, Mara found her brother's red backpack beside the boiler room. Its zipper was open, and rainwater darkened the straps. She called his name once. A flashlight clicked on behind the frosted office window, but the beam pointed at the ceiling, not at her. "Mara," her brother said from somewhere below, "leave now." She gripped the rail. The wet footprints did not stop at the office; they circled the stairwell and returned to the door behind her. Above, the lock clicked shut, small and final.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the author's likely purpose in this passage? Use two details from the plot to support your answer.

2. How does the plot structure build suspense from the first paragraph to the last paragraph?

3. What conflict does Mara face, and how do the details about her brother make that conflict stronger?

4. How does the limited third-person narration affect the reader's experience? Evaluate its effectiveness using one detail the reader does not fully understand.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90 to 110 word scene designed to make readers doubt whether a character should act. Use third-person limited narration, one delayed reveal, and at least two precise sensory words. Then write exactly two sentences explaining how your plot choice and word choice serve that purpose.

ANSWER KEY

Key After Rain

GRADE 10 · 10.T.T.1.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three words or phrases that create suspense, circle two details that limit what Mara and the reader know, and number three plot events that raise the danger. These marks will help you see how craft choices make you question whether Mara should continue. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the author's likely purpose in this passage? Use two details from the plot to support your answer.	**The author aims to create suspense and make readers question whether Mara should keep searching. The warning, the wet footprints, and the locked door increase the danger around her decision.**
2	How does the plot structure build suspense from the first paragraph to the last paragraph?	**The plot begins with a mysterious key and missing brother, adds a warning and unexplained footprints, then ends with Mara trapped near an unseen threat. Each event raises the stakes without resolving the danger.**
3	What conflict does Mara face, and how do the details about her brother make that conflict stronger?	**Mara must choose between finding her brother and obeying warnings to leave. His handwriting, his knowledge of the service entrance, and his voice below make her want to continue even though the setting seems dangerous.**
4	How does the limited third-person narration affect the reader's experience? Evaluate its effectiveness using one detail the reader does not fully understand.	**The narration gives readers only what Mara notices, so they share her uncertainty. For example, neither Mara nor the reader knows who made the wet footprints or locked the door, which makes the suspense effective.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Leah reached the greenhouse door after midnight, holding the note she had found in her father's toolbox. Inside, blue seedlings trembled beneath the lamps, though no wind moved the glass. She wanted to read the final line, but footsteps crunched on gravel outside. Leah folded the note and searched for a place to hide. A muddy glove rested on the potting bench, fresh water shining along its fingers. When the handle rattled, she opened the note at last. The missing line did not name her father. It named Leah instead. Delaying the last line keeps the conflict uncertain until the final moment, so readers question whether Leah should stay. Words such as "crunched," "muddy," and "rattled" create an uneasy setting that supports that purpose.

Accept reasonable statements of purpose that are supported by specific craft details from the passage. For Part 3, check for a 90 to 110 word scene, third-person limited viewpoint, a delayed reveal, precise sensory language, and exactly two explanatory sentences.