# The Last Key

Track how setting, metaphor, and choice build a character's change.

**10.T.T.1.e** "Effectively apply a variety of narrative techniques to develop complex character(s) who change, use setting to create mood, develop an idea or theme across the text using metaphors, achieve specific purposes, engage audiences..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline details that create the setting's mood, circle metaphors or similes, and number 1, 2, and 3 beside moments that show Mara changing.

### The Library Door

(1) At 5:40, Mara unlocked the town library with her late grandfather's brass key. Rain pressed against the tall windows, turning Main Street into a blurred charcoal sketch. The building smelled of wet wool and old paper, and every empty chair seemed to wait for a reader who would not come. Mara had volunteered to prepare the library's last day before its closure, but she planned to work silently, pack the books, and leave. Speaking at the council meeting tomorrow was her mother's problem, not hers. She kept her coat on, as if the cold rooms might make her disappear.

(2) Near noon, a boy named Imani stood beneath the awning, staring at the locked book-drop. Mara almost pretended not to see him. Instead, she opened the side door and learned that he had borrowed a guide to repairing bicycles. His father's shop had lost power in the storm, and Imani needed the diagram before a customer returned. Mara led him through dim aisles, past cartons marked DISCARD. When she found the book, its pages felt like small windows opening in the dark. She noticed labels on cartons: histories, manuals, picture books. Closing the library no longer looked like a decision. It looked like locking a bridge while people were crossing.

(3) Mara set a chair beside the steps and taped a sign to the door: SHARE WHAT THIS PLACE HOLDS. At first, only Imani spoke. Then a nurse described studying for exams at a back table after night shifts. A retired mechanic named the reference shelf that helped him start his business. Their memories gathered like kindling, and Mara felt her silence begin to burn away. By the time rain stopped, the streetlights shone on a line of neighbors holding books above their heads. Mara carried the key to the council meeting. She would not ask the council to preserve a building. She would ask it to keep a doorway open.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What mood does the library setting create in the first paragraph? Use two details from the paragraph to support your answer.

2. How does Mara change from the beginning to the end of the passage? Use one detail from the first paragraph and one detail from the last paragraph.

3. What idea do the metaphors of a “bridge” and a “doorway” develop?

4. What is Mara’s purpose at the council meeting, and how does the image of neighbors holding books support that purpose?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence scene about a character who makes a meaningful choice. Use setting details to create a mood, show the character changing, and use a metaphor twice to develop an idea.

**ANSWER KEY**

# The Last Key

**GRADE 10 · 10.T.T.1.e**

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that create the setting's mood, circle metaphors or similes, and number 1, 2, and 3 beside moments that show Mara changing. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What mood does the library setting create in the first paragraph? Use two details from the paragraph to support your answer. | **The setting creates a lonely, bleak mood. Rain blurs Main Street, the rooms are cold, and the empty chairs seem to wait for readers who will not come.** |
| 2 | How does Mara change from the beginning to the end of the passage? Use one detail from the first paragraph and one detail from the last paragraph. | **At first, Mara wants to work silently and avoid speaking at the council meeting. By the end, she carries the key to the meeting and plans to ask the council to keep the library open.** |
| 3 | What idea do the metaphors of a "bridge" and a "doorway" develop? | **They develop the idea that the library connects people to needed information, opportunities, and one another. Closing it would block access, while keeping it open would allow people to enter and connect.** |
| 4 | What is Mara's purpose at the council meeting, and how does the image of neighbors holding books support that purpose? | **Mara wants to persuade the council to keep the library open. The neighbors holding books show that the library matters to many people in the community.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Wind rattled the aluminum bleachers as Leo waited outside the dark gym, holding the unsigned team petition. He had told everyone that the broken locker room was not his problem, because speaking to the principal might cost him his captaincy. When younger players arrived with soaked shoes and nowhere to change, Leo saw their silence as a padlocked gate. He walked into the office, explained what the team needed, and asked the principal to meet with them. As rain cleared from the field lights, Leo understood that leadership meant opening the gate, even when he was afraid.

Accept supported descriptions of the mood, Mara's change, and the theme of access and community connection. For the writing task, accept varied topics if the scene has five sentences and clearly uses setting, character change, and a repeated metaphor.