

Words at the Bridge

Trace how craft shapes a narrator's changing response.

11.P.AC.1 "Reading like a Writer: Interpret texts through the author's lens by identifying, analyzing, and evaluating craft techniques that are connected to the responses, thoughts, decisions, and questions triggered by the text."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that shape the narrator's response to the bridge debate, circle each use of "Repair it before you remove it," and number the narrator's major shifts in thought or decision. Use your marks to track how the author turns a prepared opinion into a revised public response.

At the Council Meeting

- ① At six o'clock, the library meeting room smelled of wet coats and copier toner. I sat behind a table holding a cardboard model of Willow Creek Bridge, the footbridge the city planned to close after inspectors found rust in its railings. On my walk there, I had practiced one sentence: "Repair it before you remove it." Now the sentence shrank behind my teeth. Across the room, a council member stacked reports into a neat gray wall. Could a paper wall decide where I crossed to school, where my grandmother watched ducks, where neighbors met after storms?
- ② When the chair opened the public comment period, a contractor described cracks beneath the bridge supports. His voice was careful, and his photographs made the rust look like a spreading wound. I gripped my note card. Repair it before you remove it. The words returned, not as a speech but as a question. If the bridge was unsafe today, who was I to ask people to use it tomorrow? I pictured a child leaning over the rail, then pictured the long detour to the bus stop. Safety first, I thought. But safety for whom, and paid for by whom?
- ③ Then Mrs. Alvarez, who uses a wheelchair, rolled to the microphone and said the bridge's steep ramp had already kept her from the creek trail. The gray wall of reports no longer seemed like an enemy. It was evidence, and evidence demanded an answer. When my name was called, I left the model on the table. "Close the bridge until it is repaired," I said. "Post a safe route, and tell us when work will begin." My knees shook. Still, I faced the council instead of the floor. Repair it before you remove it, I thought, and make sure everyone can return.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 The reports are first described as a “neat gray wall” and later as evidence. How does this change in description reveal a change in the narrator’s thinking?

2 How does the repeated phrase “Repair it before you remove it” change from paragraph 1 to paragraph 3, and how does that change support the narrator’s final decision?

3 What does the question “But safety for whom, and paid for by whom?” make the reader consider? How does it expand the conflict?

4 Why does the author place “My knees shook” just before “Still, I faced the council instead of the floor”? Explain what the contrast shows about the narrator’s decision.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 90-110 word scene in which a narrator changes a planned public statement after learning new information. Use a repeated phrase whose meaning changes, one rhetorical question, and one sentence of four words or fewer. Then write exactly two sentences explaining how your craft choices guide the reader toward the narrator’s revised decision.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details that shape the narrator's response to the bridge debate, circle each use of "Repair it before you remove it," and number the narrator's major shifts in thought or decision. Use your marks to track how the author turns a prepared opinion into a revised public response. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	The reports are first described as a "neat gray wall" and later as evidence. How does this change in description reveal a change in the narrator's thinking?	At first, the reports seem like a barrier that could erase the narrator's memories and route to school. Later, the narrator recognizes them as necessary evidence of danger that requires action.
2	How does the repeated phrase "Repair it before you remove it" change from paragraph 1 to paragraph 3, and how does that change support the narrator's final decision?	It begins as a rehearsed demand, becomes a question about safety, and ends as a condition for fair access. This shift supports closing the bridge until it is repaired and a safe route is provided.
3	What does the question "But safety for whom, and paid for by whom?" make the reader consider? How does it expand the conflict?	It makes the reader consider who benefits from safety decisions and who bears the cost of a closure. It expands the conflict beyond saving or closing the bridge to include access and fairness.
4	Why does the author place "My knees shook" just before "Still, I faced the council instead of the floor"? Explain what the contrast shows about the narrator's decision.	The short sentence shows the narrator's fear, while "Still" emphasizes the choice to speak despite that fear. The contrast presents the decision as courageous and deliberate.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I entered the park board meeting ready to demand, "Keep the gate open." The locked gate had turned my morning runs into a long sidewalk loop. Then the ranger showed a trail-camera image of a bear and two cubs feeding beside the path. Keep the gate open, I had written across my note card. For whose convenience? The map changed everything. When the chair called on me, I asked for clear signs, a shuttle stop, and a reopening date instead. I still wanted access, but I wanted hikers to reach the trail without surprising a family of bears. Repeating "Keep the gate open" first presents a demand and later exposes its limits. The rhetorical question and short sentence turn the reader with the narrator toward a safer, revised request.

Accept evidence-based interpretations that explain how a craft choice shapes the narrator's thoughts, response, or decision. For the open task, check the word count, required techniques, and a two-sentence explanation that connects technique to reader response.