After the Alarm

Trace how a narrator turns a crisis into meaning.

11.P.EICC.2.a "Share real or imagined experiences by interpreting and constructing texts that tell or include stories. (I/C)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that show what the narrator notices or does, circle the narrator's changing thoughts, and number three moments that move the experience from danger to understanding.

The Open Library

1 On the morning our town tested its new flood siren, I was shelving books at the library, pretending not to hear the rain. The river had stayed inside its banks for years, and I had learned to treat my grandmother's warnings as weather theater. Then the lights blinked. Through the front windows, I saw water erase the chalk arrows from the sidewalk. Mrs. Vale, who usually returned mysteries with clipped opinions, stood beside the circulation desk holding a plastic bag above her head. Inside it were photographs, dry and carefully labeled.

2 I wanted to ask why pictures mattered when the street was filling, but the question sounded small even in my head. We moved the bags of books to higher shelves, not because anyone had told us to, but because lifting them gave our hands a job. At noon, the siren stopped. A boy in a yellow raincoat pressed his face to the glass and asked whether the library would open tomorrow. Mrs. Vale looked at the wet street, then handed him a book from the cart. "Today," she said, "it is open."

3 That evening, volunteers stacked sandbags near the bridge while the library became a warm, crowded island. I stamped due dates for people who could not promise where they would sleep. When my grandmother arrived, soaked to the knees, she did not say, "I told you so." She placed a towel around Mrs. Vale's photographs and smiled at me. I finally understood that her warnings were not performances. They were rehearsals for care. Years later, I remember the alarm less clearly than the quiet choices people made after it ended.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What situation places the narrator in the library, and what detail shows that the danger has become immediate?

2. How does the narrator's view of the grandmother's warnings change from the first paragraph to the last paragraph?

3. What does the narrator mean by saying that lifting books "gave our hands a job"?

4. What does the final sentence suggest the narrator values most about the experience?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 140 to 180 word first-person narrative about a moment when an ordinary place changed because of an unexpected event. Include at least two concrete sensory or action details and end with a reflection that reveals how the experience changed or clarified your understanding.

ANSWER KEY

After the Alarm

GRADE 11 · 11.P.EICC.2.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that show what the narrator notices or does, circle the narrator's changing thoughts, and number three moments that move the experience from danger to understanding. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What situation places the narrator in the library, and what detail shows that the danger has become immediate?	**The narrator is shelving books during a flood-siren test. Water erasing the chalk arrows from the sidewalk shows the danger is immediate.**
2	How does the narrator's view of the grandmother's warnings change from the first paragraph to the last paragraph?	**At first, the narrator sees the warnings as "weather theater." By the end, the narrator understands them as "rehearsals for care."**
3	What does the narrator mean by saying that lifting books "gave our hands a job"?	**Moving the books gives people a useful action to take during a frightening, uncertain situation.**
4	What does the final sentence suggest the narrator values most about the experience?	**The narrator values the community's quiet, caring choices more than the alarm or the fear it caused.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the laundromat on Oak Street, I was waiting for my father's work shirts to finish when every machine stopped at once. The fluorescent tubes went dark, and the room filled with the soft click of cooling metal. Outside, a summer storm had folded tree branches across the road, cutting the power. At first, I stared at the silent dryers, worried that we would carry home a week's worth of wet clothes. Then Mr. Chen, the owner, unlocked a cabinet and passed out battery lanterns. A woman near the window began sorting quarters for families whose washers had stopped. I held a lantern while my father wrung out a shirt, and strangers laughed at how quickly our careful schedules had become useless. When the lights returned, the laundromat looked exactly the same, but I no longer saw it as a room where people waited alone.

Accept interpretations that use relevant details from the passage and explain how events, actions, and reflection create meaning. For the narrative, accept varied real or imagined experiences if the response includes a clear event sequence, concrete details, and a concluding insight.