Messages Meet Readers

Trace how a public message changes for its situation and readers.

11.P.ST.1.c "Explore how context shapes the author's decisions and the audience's responses during the interpretation and construction of texts. (I/C)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each detail that explains why Ortiz chose a feature of the notice, and circle each detail that shows how a reader's context shaped a response.

One Notice, Many Readers

1 After a chemical spill closed the riverfront trail, the Riverton emergency office had to warn residents before the Saturday market opened. Communications director Lena Ortiz knew that the message would be read on phones, posted at bus stops, and repeated by market vendors. Because the closure affected a popular public space, she avoided technical terms from the incident report. Her first draft began with the action readers needed: "Do not enter the riverfront area." It then named the closed streets, gave a reopening update time, and listed a hotline. The immediate safety context shaped both the order and plain language of the notice.

2 Yet readers did not bring identical experiences to the notice. A parent waiting near a bus stop read the first sentence as a clear instruction and chose a different route home with her child. A vendor, worried about losing a day of sales, focused on the promised update time and called the hotline to ask whether the market itself could remain open. Some longtime residents, remembering a previous notice that arrived after a storm had already flooded streets, questioned whether the closure was necessary. Ortiz added the time stamp and the source, "Riverton Emergency Office," partly to address that distrust.

3 By noon, a screenshot of the notice spread online without the map that appeared beneath the printed version. Several commenters assumed the entire downtown was closed, although the notice named only the riverfront area and two adjoining streets. Ortiz later posted a shorter message for social media, with a link to the map and a sentence correcting the misunderstanding. This revision did not change the spill or the closure. It responded to a new reading context: people encountering a cropped image quickly, away from the full notice. The episode shows that writers build texts for real situations, but audiences also make meaning through their needs, memories, and access to information.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the urgent safety situation affect the order and wording of Ortiz's notice?

2. How did the vendor's situation shape the way the vendor interpreted and responded to the notice?

3. Why did Ortiz add a time stamp and the emergency office's name to the notice?

4. How did seeing a cropped screenshot change some commenters' interpretation, and how did Ortiz respond?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a school or community situation that requires a public notice. Write a 65 to 85-word notice, then write exactly two sentences explaining how the situation and intended audience shaped two choices and how two readers might respond differently.

ANSWER KEY

Messages Meet Readers

GRADE 11 · 11.P.ST.1.c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each detail that explains why Ortiz chose a feature of the notice, and circle each detail that shows how a reader's context shaped a response. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the urgent safety situation affect the order and wording of Ortiz's notice?	**She put the needed action first and used plain language instead of technical terms.**
2	How did the vendor's situation shape the way the vendor interpreted and responded to the notice?	**Because the vendor was worried about losing sales, the vendor focused on the update time and called to ask whether the market could stay open.**
3	Why did Ortiz add a time stamp and the emergency office's name to the notice?	**Some longtime residents distrusted the closure because of a previous late storm notice, so the details made the source and timing clearer.**
4	How did seeing a cropped screenshot change some commenters' interpretation, and how did Ortiz respond?	**Without the map, commenters assumed all downtown was closed. Ortiz posted a shorter social media message with a map link and a correction.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Beginning Monday, the school library will move to Room 214 while repairs are made to its ceiling. Students may borrow and return books there from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The usual library entrance and study tables will be unavailable. Teachers who planned class research visits should reserve Room 214 by Friday. Check the school website after 4 p.m. each day for changes to the repair schedule. Because students and teachers need the information quickly during a temporary change, I placed the new location and hours first and used direct language. A student seeking a book may go to Room 214, while a teacher planning research may focus on the reservation deadline.

Accept answers that connect a specific feature of Ortiz's message to an urgent situation, audience need, prior experience, or delivery format. For Part 3, accept varied realistic situations when the notice meets the word count and the two explanation sentences clearly address author choices and differing reader responses.