Words Under Pressure

Trace how language turns a public claim into an argument.

11.T.SS.2.a "Analyze and evaluate how the use of figurative, connotative, and/or rhetorical language contributes to the development of meaning, tone, or mood in line with the intended purpose. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three phrases that use figurative or strongly connotative language, and circle the rhetorical question. In the margin, write P, T, or M beside each mark to show whether it most develops purpose, tone, or mood.

A Voice at Harbor Marsh

1 On a rainy Thursday, residents filled the library auditorium to hear a proposal for a distribution warehouse beside Harbor Marsh. The developer promised jobs and a wider tax base. Maya Ortiz, a senior who had counted egrets there with her grandfather, waited near the microphone. Through the windows, runoff streamed along the curb toward the creek. The council had not yet voted, and several members were studying maps that showed loading docks, access roads, and the remaining strip of reeds. Maya unfolded one page of notes, then left it on her chair.

2 "Harbor Marsh is not an empty lot," Maya began. "It is one of this town's lungs, taking in floodwater and giving birds a place to rest." She pointed to the map. "We are being offered a bargain that bills our future. Trucks may bring paychecks, but diesel and pavement will send the bill to our creek, our air, and our neighbors." Her voice remained steady as rain tapped the glass. A council member shifted in his seat, while the developer folded his hands beside a stack of glossy renderings.

3 "Some will call the warehouse progress," Maya said, "but progress should not arrive wearing a mask." She looked across the room at the council. "When the next heavy rain climbs our streets, will we tell families that the flooded basements were worth it?" No one answered. Maya asked the council to require a different site or reject the plan. Outside, the rain eased, but the creek continued to rise behind the library. Several residents held damp umbrellas near the door, and a reporter wrote down the final request.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does Maya's comparison of Harbor Marsh to "one of this town's lungs" suggest about the marsh? Explain how the comparison supports her argument.

2. What connotations does the phrase "a bargain that bills our future" give the warehouse proposal? How do those connotations shape Maya's tone?

3. How do Maya's use of "we" and "our" and her rhetorical question about flooded basements affect her audience?

4. Evaluate the effect of Maya's statement that "progress should not arrive wearing a mask." What does the image of a mask imply, and how does it develop her purpose and the mood of the speech?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence statement to a school board about replacing a shaded courtyard with a parking lot. State your position, include one figurative comparison, one strongly connotative word or phrase, and one rhetorical question, then explain in the fourth sentence how one language choice supports your purpose and tone.

ANSWER KEY

Words Under Pressure

GRADE 11 · 11.T.SS.2.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three phrases that use figurative or strongly connotative language, and circle the rhetorical question. In the margin, write P, T, or M beside each mark to show whether it most develops purpose, tone, or mood. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Maya's comparison of Harbor Marsh to "one of this town's lungs" suggest about the marsh? Explain how the comparison supports her argument.	**It presents the marsh as an essential, life-supporting part of the town. The comparison supports Maya's argument that destroying it would harm the community.**
2	What connotations does the phrase "a bargain that bills our future" give the warehouse proposal? How do those connotations shape Maya's tone?	**The phrase suggests that an attractive deal has delayed and costly consequences. It creates skeptical, cautionary tone.**
3	How do Maya's use of "we" and "our" and her rhetorical question about flooded basements affect her audience?	**The inclusive pronouns connect the council and residents to the consequences, while the rhetorical question pushes them to imagine personal harm and accept responsibility for the decision.**
4	Evaluate the effect of Maya's statement that "progress should not arrive wearing a mask." What does the image of a mask imply, and how does it develop her purpose and the mood of the speech?	**The mask implies that the proposal's promise of progress is deceptive or hides damage. It strengthens Maya's purpose of challenging the plan and creates a distrustful, urgent mood.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The courtyard is our school's green refuge, not unused space. Paving it would trade shade and gathering places for a bleak expanse of asphalt. When summer heat presses against the building, where will students go to breathe between classes? Calling the courtyard a "green refuge" supports my persuasive purpose by creating a protective, concerned tone.

Accept equivalent analyses that accurately identify a language choice and explain its effect on meaning, tone, mood, audience, or purpose. For the open task, accept varied positions if all required language choices and the fourth-sentence explanation are present.