

Signal Under Pressure

Compare three crafted versions of one rescue.

11.T.T.1.b “Compare and evaluate how an author uses plot structures, conflict, narrative devices, word choice, and other craft techniques to impact audiences and create purpose in two or more texts. (I)”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail that shows Mara’s conflict in each text, circle a repeated or sensory word or phrase in each text, and number Text B’s events in chronological order. Use your marks to compare how structure and language create tension.

The Last Signal, Three Tellings

- ① Text A, “The Last Signal”: At 8:03 p.m., Mara saw the harbor beacon go dark. The ferry, a white smudge beyond the breakwater, kept moving toward the rocks. She ran up the iron stairs, cut her palm on the emergency cabinet, and found the spare lamp. When she twisted it in, the lens flashed once, then held. Below, the ferry changed course. Only after its horn answered did Mara notice the blood on her hand. Wind shook the glass around her, but the steady beam swept the black water. Mara leaned against the wall and laughed once, breathlessly.
- ② Text B, “The Last Signal”: The horn sounded first, long and low, before Mara understood why. Its echo pulled her back to the dark beacon, then to the open cabinet and the red line across her palm. Before that, she had reached for the spare lamp and heard glass rattle in the wind. Earlier still, the ferry had been only a white smudge beyond the breakwater. Now the beam held steady over the water, and the horn faded toward the harbor. Mara pressed her injured hand against her jacket. She did not look down at the rocks. Instead, she watched the ferry become a cluster of warm windows.
- ③ Text C, “The Last Signal”: You are Mara, and the first thing you hear is your own breath, thin inside the lighthouse stairwell. The beacon has failed, yet the ferry’s horn keeps nearing the rocks. You tell yourself to climb, but the stairs seem to tilt beneath you. “One step,” you repeat, although your hand is slippery against the rail. One step. The cabinet waits above, holding a lamp you have never changed alone. Below, the horn calls again. If you miss the next stair, the sound will come closer. You raise your foot. The passage ends before it lands.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Compare the plot structures of Text A and Text B. How does each structure affect the way readers experience the rescue?

2 What conflict does Mara face in Text C? Use two details from the text to explain why the conflict feels difficult.

3 Compare how the horn is used in Text B and Text C. How does its description and placement affect tension in each text?

4 Which text most strongly puts readers inside an unresolved decision? Identify one narrative device and one ending detail that support your evaluation.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word Text D about a person deciding whether to reveal an urgent warning. Use either first-person or second-person narration and repeat a word or phrase for effect. Then write exactly two sentences that compare one craft choice in your text with Text B or Text C and evaluate its effect on readers.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one detail that shows Mara's conflict in each text, circle a repeated or sensory word or phrase in each text, and number Text B's events in chronological order. Use your marks to compare how structure and language create tension. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare the plot structures of Text A and Text B. How does each structure affect the way readers experience the rescue?	Text A presents events in chronological order, which makes the rescue feel immediate and fast. Text B begins after the danger has passed and moves backward, which makes readers piece together what happened.
2	What conflict does Mara face in Text C? Use two details from the text to explain why the conflict feels difficult.	Mara must climb to the cabinet and replace the failed lamp before the ferry reaches the rocks. The tilting stairs, her slippery hand, and the fact that she has never changed the lamp alone make the choice feel dangerous.
3	Compare how the horn is used in Text B and Text C. How does its description and placement affect tension in each text?	In Text B, the horn sounds at the beginning and later fades, moving readers from uncertainty toward relief. In Text C, the horn keeps calling and seems to come closer, increasing pressure as Mara hesitates.
4	Which text most strongly puts readers inside an unresolved decision? Identify one narrative device and one ending detail that support your evaluation.	Text C most strongly places readers inside an unresolved decision. Its second-person narration makes the reader Mara, and it ends before Mara's raised foot lands on the next stair.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Text D: I found the warning flag folded beneath the radio, but I left it there. Too late, I thought. The ferry lights drifted beyond the pier, calm as stars. Then the radio crackled: Beacon out. I ran to the tower, carrying the flag though no one could see it in the rain. Too late. At the top, I raised it anyway. The red cloth snapped once, sharply. Far below, the ferry turned, and I finally heard my father calling my name from the dock. Like Text C, Text D uses a repeated phrase, but "Too late" makes the speaker's guilt more visible than Mara's physical fear. The first-person voice lets readers hear the speaker's private thought, creating regret before the ferry turns.

Accept equivalent claims when students accurately compare a structural, narrative, or language choice and explain its audience effect with relevant passage evidence. For Part 3, check the word count, required narration and repetition, and a two-sentence comparison that evaluates an effect.