Words for Shade

Analyze how a public-comment poem builds urgency and connection.

11.T.T.4 "Poetic Techniques: Evaluate and apply poetic techniques to enhance text's appeal to audiences or achieve specific purposes."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two sensory or figurative images, circle each repeated phrase, and write a brief margin note naming the effect each choice could have on council listeners.

At the Council Microphone

1 At the council microphone, I carry July in my throat. The bus stop shimmers, a tin roof above twelve waiting bodies. Asphalt breathes heat through thin soles, and the crosswalk flashes white as a warning flare. Across town, maples lift their green hands over wide lawns, while our block counts minutes in the sun. I say, "Listen," because the noon air crackles. I say, "Listen," because a grandmother grips a paper fan beside a stroller. The room is cool, but my words arrive sweating for us.

2 Plant trees, I ask, not as decorations but as public shade. Let roots stitch the split soil; let branches braid a roof above the sidewalk. A young oak will not erase this summer, yet it can make a smaller future for a child walking home. We need shade at the stop. We need shade by the clinic. We need shade where delivery riders wait with bright boxes on their backs. When leaves rattle like soft applause, they will not solve every injustice, but they will answer one plain question: who gets to stand outside without burning?

3 Some will measure a tree by its price tag, its water bill, its years before it reaches the second floor. Measure it also by the silence it gives a baby sleeping near an open window, by the cooler handle of a grocery cart, by the neighbor who chooses to walk rather than hide indoors. We can pave a street until it gleams like a skillet. Or we can plant a living canopy, block by block, and let the city learn a gentler weather. Council members, choose the shade that says every neighborhood belongs to tomorrow.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What repeated phrase in paragraph 2 builds urgency, and how does it strengthen the speaker's request?

2. How does the personification "Asphalt breathes heat" affect the description of the neighborhood?

3. Compare "leaves rattle like soft applause" with a street that "gleams like a skillet." How do these comparisons support the poem's argument?

4. Who is the poem's intended audience, and what action does the speaker want that audience to take? Use one detail from the poem.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 55-70-word public-comment poem urging a local decision maker to address a community need. Use one instance of personification or metaphor, one repeated phrase, and one sensory detail. After the poem, write one sentence explaining how one technique supports your purpose.

ANSWER KEY

Words for Shade

GRADE 11 · 11.T.T.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two sensory or figurative images, circle each repeated phrase, and write a brief margin note naming the effect each choice could have on council listeners. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What repeated phrase in paragraph 2 builds urgency, and how does it strengthen the speaker's request?	**"We need shade" repeats three times. It emphasizes urgency and shows that shade is needed in several public places.**
2	How does the personification "Asphalt breathes heat" affect the description of the neighborhood?	**It makes the pavement seem alive and makes the heat feel physical, oppressive, and difficult to escape.**
3	Compare "leaves rattle like soft applause" with a street that "gleams like a skillet." How do these comparisons support the poem's argument?	**The leaves create a hopeful, comforting image of trees, while the skillet emphasizes dangerous heat from pavement. Together, they contrast a cooler planted city with a harsh paved one.**
4	Who is the poem's intended audience, and what action does the speaker want that audience to take? Use one detail from the poem.	**The audience is the council members. The speaker wants them to plant trees and provide equitable public shade, shown by "Council members, choose the shade."**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mayor, the last bus leaves our neighborhood in a trail of red taillights. Rain taps cold fingers on students waiting beneath the broken shelter. We need later buses. We need rides that reach night-shift workers and teenagers after practice. Let the route become a bridge, not a locked gate, so families can cross the dark city and arrive home safely. The repeated phrase stresses that reliable transportation serves more than one group.

Accept varied interpretations when students identify a specific technique and explain an effect that is supported by the poem. For Part 3, accept any local need and decision maker if the poem is 55-70 words and includes the required techniques plus a purposeful explanation.