Dust on Paper

Trace how a speaker's viewpoints shape language and theme.

12.T.C.2.c "Evaluate the extent to which historical, disciplinary, and/or personal perspectives affect authors' stylistic and thematic choices in text. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline phrases that reveal the narrator's personal, historical, or disciplinary perspective, circle a related stylistic choice, and write P, H, or D beside each underlined phrase to show how perspective shapes the writing.

Black Sunday, in Type

1 On April 14, 1935, the day later called Black Sunday, I was setting type at the Cimarron County News in Boise City, Oklahoma. By midafternoon, dust struck the windows like handfuls of thrown gravel. The press shuddered, and its sharp smell of ink vanished beneath the dry, bitter air. I wrote the headline twice because the first letters disappeared under grit. In my memory, the storm was not a weather report. It was a roomful of grown people holding their breath together in the dark.

2 Yet I had read federal soil bulletins that blamed years of deep plowing and drought, not one wicked afternoon. Their plain measurements taught me to notice fields, winds, and human decisions together. In my article, I used dates and distances instead of the prayers my mother whispered at home. Still, the facts did not make the storm distant. A child stood in our doorway with a damp cloth over her mouth, and I saw how a national disaster entered one family's lungs. The line between public record and private fear blurred each time I wrote.

3 Years afterward, people might call my language dramatic, and they would be right. A scientist could explain the storm with pressure, soil, and wind; an editor could choose calmer verbs. But neither one had watched the noon sky turn black while neighbors searched for water and work. I made the dust a character that knocked, hid, and entered because it seemed to command our lives. The piece finally argues that survival requires more than accurate records. It requires people to witness one another when public catastrophe becomes private loss.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What two details reveal the narrator's personal experience of the storm, and how do they shape the passage's sensory language?

2. How does the narrator's knowledge of soil bulletins affect the style of the article he says he wrote?

3. To what extent does the narrator's personal perspective, rather than the historical context alone, control the passage's language? Use one example.

4. What theme about public events and private experience does the final paragraph develop? Explain how the narrator's role as a witness supports it.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90-110 word first-person paragraph set during a real historical event you know. Let a speaker's personal perspective and role shape the language, using one image and one contrast to develop a theme about public events and private experience.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 12 · 12.T.C.2.c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline phrases that reveal the narrator's personal, historical, or disciplinary perspective, circle a related stylistic choice, and write P, H, or D beside each underlined phrase to show how perspective shapes the writing. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What two details reveal the narrator's personal experience of the storm, and how do they shape the passage's sensory language?	**The narrator rewrites a grit-covered headline and sees a child with a cloth over her mouth. These experiences produce concrete images of dust, ink, breathing, and fear.**
2	How does the narrator's knowledge of soil bulletins affect the style of the article he says he wrote?	**It leads him to use dates and distances and to connect drought, plowing, wind, and human decisions. His reporting style becomes more factual and analytical.**
3	To what extent does the narrator's personal perspective, rather than the historical context alone, control the passage's language? Use one example.	**Personal perspective strongly controls the language. Although the historical context supplies facts about drought and plowing, the narrator personifies dust because he experienced its effects on neighbors and family.**
4	What theme about public events and private experience does the final paragraph develop? Explain how the narrator's role as a witness supports it.	**The passage argues that public disasters become private losses and require human witness as well as accurate records. The narrator supports this theme by reporting facts while remembering individual suffering.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On July 20, 1969, I watched the Apollo 11 lunar module settle onto the Moon from our Houston living room. My father, a technician at the Manned Spacecraft Center, did not cheer. He held his coffee untouched and listened to the television's crackle. To the announcer, the landing belonged to history; to me, it was the first time I saw worry and wonder share one face. The gray screen made the Moon seem near, but my father's silence reminded me that public triumph can rest on private labor and risk for years.

Accept defensible answers that connect a specific perspective clue to a specific language or thematic choice. For the open response, check the 90-110 word range, a real historical setting, a clear personal role, an image, a contrast, and a theme about public and private experience.