Words That Protect

Analyze how a public comment builds its case through word choice and rhetoric.

12.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 figurative comparisons and circle loaded or connotative words and phrases. Number each rhetorical question, then use your marks to track how the speaker makes preservation sound necessary.

Public Comment: Save the East Marsh

1 Members of the council, the east marsh is not an empty lot waiting for a useful purpose. At high tide, it becomes a wide, breathing basin, taking in water that would otherwise press against nearby streets. Egrets hunt along its edges, and young fish shelter among the grasses. Scientists have long documented that wetlands can slow floodwater, filter some pollutants, and provide habitat. Yet the proposed parking expansion treats this living system as surplus ground. Its concrete promises convenience, but it also asks us to trade a public safeguard for a few more painted spaces.

2 The plan's supporters describe the marsh as underused, a chilly word that hides what the place gives away freely. Children watch herons there after school. Neighbors walk its boardwalk when summer heat turns the pavement into a griddle. During heavy rain, the marsh is a sponge at the city's edge, not a decorative puddle. Will we call it progress if water reaches basements while cars occupy the ground that once held it? A city reveals its values in what it protects. We should repair the existing lot and keep the marsh open, resilient, and alive.

3 Some will say a larger lot brings shoppers, and their concern deserves an answer. But shoppers do not need a view of floodwater creeping across a curb, and local businesses do not benefit when a neighborhood loses the wildlife and open space that make it worth visiting. The marsh is the city's quiet insurance policy, paid for not with premiums but with roots, soil, and space for water. Do we want our children to inherit another hot rectangle of asphalt, or a shoreline where they can see a heron lift into the evening? Reject the expansion and invest in safer transit and lot repairs instead.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the description of the marsh as “not an empty lot” shape the speaker's meaning and purpose?

2. What effect does the phrase “a chilly word” have on the tone when the speaker discusses the word “underused”?

3. How does the rhetorical question about water reaching basements strengthen the speaker's argument?

4. Compare the marsh as “a sponge” with the marsh as “the city's quiet insurance policy.” What shared idea do these comparisons develop?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence public-comment appeal about a different local issue. Include one figurative comparison, one deliberately connotative word or phrase, and one rhetorical question, then use the fourth sentence to explain how those choices create a tone that serves your purpose.

ANSWER KEY

Words That Protect

GRADE 12 · 12.T.SS.2.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline figurative comparisons and circle loaded or connotative words and phrases. Number each rhetorical question, then use your marks to track how the speaker makes preservation sound necessary. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the description of the marsh as "not an empty lot" shape the speaker's meaning and purpose?	**It presents the marsh as a living, useful ecosystem rather than unused property, supporting the speaker's purpose of preserving it.**
2	What effect does the phrase "a chilly word" have on the tone when the speaker discusses the word "underused"?	**It makes "underused" sound cold and dismissive, creating a critical tone toward supporters of the parking expansion.**
3	How does the rhetorical question about water reaching basements strengthen the speaker's argument?	**It asks listeners to recognize that calling the project progress is unreasonable if removing the marsh increases flood risk, creating urgency to reject the expansion.**
4	Compare the marsh as "a sponge" with the marsh as "the city's quiet insurance policy." What shared idea do these comparisons develop?	**Both comparisons portray the marsh as protection against flooding. They make its ecological value concrete and support the case for keeping it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Closing the library on Sundays would turn a shared lighthouse into a dark building just when many students need its guidance. That shortsighted cut would silence a welcoming refuge for families without quiet workspaces. Why should a student's access to research depend on whether home offers a desk and internet? The lighthouse comparison, the words "shortsighted" and "refuge," and the question create an urgent, concerned tone that supports keeping Sunday hours.

Accept equivalent analyses that connect a specific language choice to meaning, tone, mood, or the speaker's purpose. For the open response, accept varied local issues if the response has four sentences and uses all required techniques purposefully.