Platform After Midnight

Analyze how imagery, repetition, and structure shape a poem's meaning.

12.T.T.4.a "Read, discuss, evaluate, and critique a variety of poetic texts, considering poetic techniques used to present and design content and their associated implications on meaning and/or theme. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two comparisons or examples of personification, circle words or images that repeat, and number the point where the speaker's thinking shifts so you can trace how the poem develops its meaning.

After the Last Train

(1) At 11:47, the platform keeps its breath. The departure board blinks one red eye, then closes it. Rain writes thin letters on the rail, erasing each word before I read. My father's coat, hung over my arm, still holds the sharp weather of his last walk. Across the tracks, a vending machine hums its small, bright hymn to nobody. I count the empty benches, one, two, three, as if numbers could make a room for him. The tunnel opens its black mouth and waits with me.

(2) At 11:52, a train arrives without slowing, a silver sentence crossing the dark without a period. Its windows carry faces that flash, vanish, flash again. I do not wave. Instead, I press my palm to the cold timetable, where his name is not printed anywhere. The loudspeaker says, "Stand clear," and repeats it, calm as a nurse rehearsing bad news. For one long minute, the word clear means empty. Then the train folds the rain into its wake, and the platform exhales beside my waiting hand.

(3) At midnight, the board wakes its red eye. A new destination appears, not his, not mine, yet the letters hold steady in the rain. I lift the coat and put it on. The sleeves are too long, so my hands disappear, but I step toward the exit anyway. Behind me, the benches keep their count. Ahead, the streetlights scatter coins on puddles. I do not call this leaving. I call it learning the weight of a door before it opens, and the air changes around my face.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Identify two examples of personification in the poem. Explain how one of them makes the setting reflect the speaker's emotion.

2. The image of the board's "red eye" appears in the first and third paragraphs. How does this repeated image help structure the poem and develop its theme?

3. In the second paragraph, why does "clear" mean "empty" to the speaker? Analyze the word's meaning in context.

4. Evaluate the metaphor that calls the train "a silver sentence crossing the dark without a period." How does it contribute to the poem's meaning?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70-100-word poem about a familiar place changed by an absence. Use sustained personification or a sustained comparison, repeat one word or image at least twice, and create a clear shift from observation to realization. After the poem, write one sentence explaining how your technique shapes the poem's meaning.

ANSWER KEY

Platform After Midnight

GRADE 12 · 12.T.T.4.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two comparisons or examples of personification, circle words or images that repeat, and number the point where the speaker's thinking shifts so you can trace how the poem develops its meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Identify two examples of personification in the poem. Explain how one of them makes the setting reflect the speaker's emotion.	**Examples include "the platform keeps its breath," "Rain writes thin letters," "the platform exhales," and "the board wakes its red eye." The personification makes the station seem tense, watchful, and affected by the speaker's grief.**
2	The image of the board's "red eye" appears in the first and third paragraphs. How does this repeated image help structure the poem and develop its theme?	**The repeated image frames the poem. The board first closes its eye during grief, then wakes when a new destination appears, suggesting a movement from loss toward tentative forward motion.**
3	In the second paragraph, why does "clear" mean "empty" to the speaker? Analyze the word's meaning in context.	**The loudspeaker's instruction reminds the speaker that the father is absent. "Clear" changes from a safety command to a description of the empty space left by loss.**
4	Evaluate the metaphor that calls the train "a silver sentence crossing the dark without a period." How does it contribute to the poem's meaning?	**The metaphor is effective because a sentence without a period feels unfinished. It reflects the speaker's unresolved grief and the train's continuous movement through the night.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After school, the kitchen chair waits beside its square of sunlight. It holds its wooden breath while the kettle clicks and cools. Chair, chair, I say, as if the empty place could answer. Then I set my backpack down and hear the house make room. The chair is not a missing person, but it teaches my eyes to notice how silence can sit at dinner, when no one pulls it back. Personifying the chair makes the absence feel active and visible, while the shift shows the speaker recognizing it.

Accept well-supported interpretations that identify accurate textual evidence and explain a plausible effect on mood, meaning, or theme. For the original poem, look for a clear technique, intentional repetition, and a recognizable shift in perspective.