Pace Under Pressure

Trace why a story slows down or speeds up.

6.T.T.1.b "Analyze how setting, events, conflict, and characterization influence plot pacing. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that slow the action, and number three events that make the action move faster. In the margin, write S, E, C, or CH beside each mark to show whether setting, event, conflict, or characterization affects the pace.

The Missing Compass

1 At dusk, Mara locked the small museum on Harbor Street while rain tapped the windows. She had promised her grandfather she would bring his brass compass home before the storm reached the docks. Inside the quiet building, she checked each display case twice, although the compass rested safely in the last one. Then the lights flickered. From the storage room came a sharp clatter, followed by the scrape of something sliding across the floor. Mara froze beside the front desk and listened again.

2 Mara hurried back to the gallery, but the hallway was dark except for flashes of lightning. The last display case stood open, and rainwater streamed beneath it. The compass was gone. She wanted to race outside, yet she stopped to notice a line of wet footprints leading toward the back door. Her grandfather had taught her that panic hid useful details. Holding her breath, Mara followed the prints down the narrow stairs, one careful step at a time.

3 At the dock, Mara spotted her neighbor, Eli, crouched beside a mooring post nearby. He had grabbed the compass after it slid through the open window and was bringing it to safety. Now a gust had caught his hood, and he could not untie the rope around his bicycle. Mara almost accused him, but his shaking hands changed her mind. Together they freed the knot, and she tucked the compass deeper into her pocket as the first thunder cracked overhead.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the quiet museum setting at the beginning affect the story's pace?

2. Which two events near the end of paragraph 1 make the pace faster, and why?

3. How does the missing-compass conflict affect the pace in paragraph 2? Include what Mara does when she sees the footprints.

4. How does Mara's reaction to Eli affect the pace of the ending?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 4-sentence scene with a slow beginning and a faster ending. Show how the setting, an event, a conflict, and a character's choice each affect the pace.

ANSWER KEY

Pace Under Pressure

GRADE 6 · 6.T.T.1.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that slow the action, and number three events that make the action move faster. In the margin, write S, E, C, or CH beside each mark to show whether setting, event, conflict, or characterization affects the pace. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the quiet museum setting at the beginning affect the story's pace?	**The quiet museum and Mara's careful checking create a slow, suspenseful beginning.**
2	Which two events near the end of paragraph 1 make the pace faster, and why?	**The lights flicker, and Mara hears a clatter and scraping sound. These sudden events interrupt her routine and create urgency and mystery.**
3	How does the missing-compass conflict affect the pace in paragraph 2? Include what Mara does when she sees the footprints.	**The missing compass makes the search urgent, but Mara slows down to study the footprints and follow them carefully.**
4	How does Mara's reaction to Eli affect the pace of the ending?	**Instead of accusing Eli, Mara pauses when she sees his shaking hands. Her choice leads to a quick cooperative solution as they free the bicycle and recover the compass.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Snow covered the empty playground as Jun waited beside the locked shed, counting the slow drips from the roof. When a soccer ball rolled beneath the fence, he crawled after it and heard the gate click shut behind him. Jun wanted to yank the gate, but his patient habit made him search the snow for another way out. He spotted a loose board, pushed it aside, and scrambled through as the custodian's truck turned into the lot.

Accept answers that identify a specific passage detail and explain how it slows or speeds the action. For the open task, accept varied scenes if all four influences are present and the pacing shift is clear.