Context Shapes Conflict

Trace how setting and history shape events.

7.T.C.2.c "Analyze the impact of background information and context (e.g., geography, location, era, historical happenings) on text development. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details about the place, time, and historical conditions. Number 1, 2, and 3 beside three places where one of those details changes what a character does or what happens.

The Wind at Noon

1 On an April morning in 1935, Lena Ortiz stepped onto her family's farm near Boise City, Oklahoma. The flat prairie usually let her see the schoolhouse roof two miles away, but a brown wall rose along the northern horizon. Years of drought had dried the soil, and many farmers had plowed up native grasses that once held it down. Lena's father had heard radio reports about dust storms, yet he still stared at the sky as if it were a stranger.

2 By noon, the storm swallowed the sun. Lena tied a wet cloth over her little brother's mouth and led him to the cellar, where her mother had placed jars of water and a lantern. Dust slipped through window cracks and covered the table like flour. The family did not drive toward town because the roads disappeared beneath the blowing dirt. Instead, they listened for the barn door, hoping its latch would hold until the storm passed.

3 When the air cleared the next day, Lena found wheat seedlings bent flat in the field. Her father said they might not have enough money to buy seed again, since crop prices were low during the Great Depression. Lena looked toward the schoolhouse, which had been closed for the storm, and wondered whether her friend Ruth could still come over Saturday. Then she picked up a broom. Sweeping the porch would not save the crop, but it gave her family one small way to begin.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the flat prairie setting help develop the beginning of the passage?

2. How do the drought and the loss of native grasses affect the events in the passage?

3. Why does the family go to the cellar instead of driving toward town? Use the storm's conditions in your answer.

4. How does the Great Depression add to the family's problem after the storm?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 4-5 sentence scene in a different specific place and time. Include at least two context details, such as geography, weather, or a historical event, and show how each detail affects a character's choice or the events.

ANSWER KEY

Context Shapes Conflict

GRADE 7 · 7.T.C.2.c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details about the place, time, and historical conditions. Number 1, 2, and 3 beside three places where one of those details changes what a character does or what happens. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the flat prairie setting help develop the beginning of the passage?	**Its open, flat land lets Lena see the brown dust wall approaching from far away.**
2	How do the drought and the loss of native grasses affect the events in the passage?	**They leave the soil dry and loose, helping create the dangerous dust storm.**
3	Why does the family go to the cellar instead of driving toward town? Use the storm's conditions in your answer.	**They shelter in the cellar because dust is entering the house and the blowing dirt has made the roads disappear.**
4	How does the Great Depression add to the family's problem after the storm?	**Low crop prices mean the family may not have enough money to buy new seed for the damaged field.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In a coastal Alaska town in March 1964, Maya was stacking canned food when the ground began to shake. Because the town sat near the ocean, her grandfather told everyone to move uphill after the earthquake. The cold evening made Maya grab blankets before leaving the house. At the school on higher ground, she watched the harbor from far away and understood why they could not go back yet.

Accept equivalent explanations that connect a context detail to an event, problem, or character choice. For Part 3, accept any 4-5 sentence scene with at least two clear context details and clear effects on the action.