Light Before Dark

Trace how narrative choices shape a character's urgent journey.

7.T.T.1.a "Analyze how narrative techniques are used across the text to develop plot, characters, and setting. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline setting details, circle words that show Mara's thoughts or memories, and number three events that move the plot forward. Use your marks to trace how the story develops across all three paragraphs.

The Keeper's Key

1 By the time Mara reached the old ferry dock, the last boat was a white smudge beyond the bay. Rain tapped the empty ticket booth, and gulls cried over the gray water. She gripped the tin lunchbox her grandfather had left on her porch that morning. Inside was a brass key and a note: "Take this to the lighthouse before dark." Mara had promised herself she would never return to the island where he had once been keeper, but the rising wind made the choice feel urgent.

2 At the dock gate, Mara hesitated. She remembered standing beside her grandfather years earlier, watching him polish the lighthouse lens until it flashed like a small sun. "A light is a promise," he had told her then. Now, a sharp bell rang from the harbor, warning that the storm was closing the channel. Mara unlocked a narrow supply shed and found an old rowboat. The oars were heavy, but each pull carried her farther from the shore and closer to the dark island.

3 When Mara reached the lighthouse, waves slapped the rocks below its door. The key opened a drawer beneath the dead lamp, where she found fresh oil and a folded map marked with a safe route through the channel. Her grandfather had planned for this storm. Mara climbed the twisting stairs, her hands shaking as the tower groaned. At the top, she filled the lamp and struck a match. A steady beam swept across the water just as the missing ferry turned toward the harbor.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1 How does the detail that Mara had promised herself never to return to the island develop her character and the plot in paragraph 1?

2 How does Mara's memory of her grandfather and his words, "A light is a promise," affect her actions in paragraph 2?

3 Which details in paragraph 2 increase the pace and tension of the journey? Explain how they affect the plot.

4 How do the lighthouse setting and the storm help resolve the plot in paragraph 3?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly three sentences that add a final scene after the ferry reaches the harbor. Include one setting detail, one thought or line of dialogue from Mara, and one action that shows how she has changed.

ANSWER KEY # Light Before Dark

GRADE 7 · 7.T.T.1.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline setting details, circle words that show Mara's thoughts or memories, and number three events that move the plot forward. Use your marks to trace how the story develops across all three paragraphs. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the detail that Mara had promised herself never to return to the island develop her character and the plot in paragraph 1?	**It shows that Mara is reluctant and afraid to return, so taking the key to the lighthouse becomes a difficult but urgent choice.**
2	How does Mara's memory of her grandfather and his words, "A light is a promise," affect her actions in paragraph 2?	**The memory shows her grandfather's values and helps motivate Mara to row to the lighthouse despite the storm.**
3	Which details in paragraph 2 increase the pace and tension of the journey? Explain how they affect the plot.	**The harbor bell warning that the storm is closing the channel and the heavy oars make time seem limited. They raise the stakes and push Mara to keep moving.**
4	How do the lighthouse setting and the storm help resolve the plot in paragraph 3?	**The storm makes the ferry's route dangerous, while the lighthouse contains oil and a map. Mara lights the lamp, and the beam helps the missing ferry turn safely toward the harbor.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On the harbor pier, rainwater shimmered around Mara's boots as the ferry bumped safely against the posts. "A promise can travel farther than a boat," she thought, holding the warm key in her palm. When the passengers stepped onto the dock, Mara decided she would learn to keep the lighthouse light burning, changing her fear of the island into a new responsibility.

Accept answers that identify specific narrative techniques, such as setting details, memory, dialogue, pacing, and action, and explain their effects on plot or character. For Part 3, accept varied scenes if they contain exactly three sentences and all required elements.