Words That Move

See how deliberate language shapes a scene.

8.T.SS.2 "Craft: Interpret and use language to craft engaging texts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each comparison or sensory detail, and circle vivid verbs that make an action clear. These language choices help create an engaging scene.

The Last Bell

1 At 3:17, the final bell split the humid air, and Maya shoved her sketchbook into her backpack. Outside, rain tapped the pavement like impatient fingers. Most students rushed toward buses, but Maya stopped beside the vacant lot across from school. A blue heron stood there, pale and still among puddles and bent weeds. Its long beak pointed toward the water, as if the bird had been waiting for a message. Maya forgot the bell, the buses, and even the rain.

2 She opened her sketchbook beneath the awning of a closed corner store. Instead of writing, "The bird was pretty," Maya drew quick lines and wrote, "Its silver feathers flashed against the bruised sky." The words made the heron seem sharp and important, not merely attractive. Then the bird lifted one thin leg from the mud. It moved with the care of a dancer crossing a stage covered in glass. Maya held her breath. Splash. The heron had caught a small fish, and the puddles shivered around its feet.

3 On the walk home, Maya noticed that the lot was not empty after all. Water gathered in tire tracks, and tiny beetles skimmed its surface. The heron stepped into the weeds, then vanished behind a chain-link fence. Maya wrote one final line: "Even forgotten places keep a secret pulse." She did not mean that the lot had a real heartbeat. She meant that life continued there, hidden from people hurrying past. By dinner, her page held more than a bird. It held a reason to look again.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What effect does the phrase “the final bell split the humid air” create at the beginning of the passage?

2. How does Maya’s description of the heron’s “silver feathers” and “bruised sky” make the bird seem different from simply calling it pretty?

3. What does the comparison to “a dancer crossing a stage covered in glass” suggest about the heron’s movement?

4. What does Maya mean by “Even forgotten places keep a secret pulse”? Use the next sentence to explain.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 4-sentence scene about a place people usually pass without noticing. Use one precise action verb, one sensory detail, one comparison, and one sentence with three words or fewer to show that the place matters.

ANSWER KEY

Words That Move

GRADE 8 · 8.T.SS.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each comparison or sensory detail, and circle vivid verbs that make an action clear. These language choices help create an engaging scene. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What effect does the phrase "the final bell split the humid air" create at the beginning of the passage?	**It makes the bell seem sudden and forceful, opening the scene with a sharp interruption.**
2	How does Maya's description of the heron's "silver feathers" and "bruised sky" make the bird seem different from simply calling it pretty?	**The precise images make the heron seem sharp, striking, and important.**
3	What does the comparison to "a dancer crossing a stage covered in glass" suggest about the heron's movement?	**It suggests that the heron moves very carefully and delicately.**
4	What does Maya mean by "Even forgotten places keep a secret pulse"? Use the next sentence to explain.	**She means that life continues in overlooked places, even when people hurry past without noticing it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Behind the grocery store, rainwater slid through a cracked curb and smelled of wet cardboard. A sparrow pecked at a seed, then darted beneath a rusted cart. Its brown wings flickered like leaves in a gutter. Nobody looked.

Accept answers that accurately explain how specific word choices, comparisons, and sentence length affect the scene. For the writing task, check for four sentences, a precise verb, sensory detail, comparison, and a sentence of three words or fewer.