Signal in the Rain

Trace how conflict and time shifts build suspense.

8.T.T.1.b "Analyze how plot structures, conflict, and narrative devices (e.g., flashback, foreshadowing) work together to create an intended effect (e.g., suspense, tension, humor) on the audience. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words or actions that show Lena's conflict, circle the flashback, and box the early detail that later becomes a warning. Use your marks to notice how suspense grows.

The Last Train Station

1 At 6:10, Lena slipped into the closed-down train station with her grandfather's brass key in her palm. Rain tapped the cracked skylight, and the departure board flickered although no trains ran there anymore. She had promised to retrieve his forgotten violin before the building was demolished at dawn. At the far end of the platform, a red signal lamp blinked once, then went dark. Lena gripped the key tighter and listened to water dripping somewhere below.

2 On the stairs, Lena remembered her grandfather showing her the station years earlier. "Never step beyond the yellow line," he had said, pointing toward a service tunnel. Then, last week, he had fallen ill before he could explain why the violin was hidden here. A metallic scrape rose from the tunnel. Lena found the storage-room door, but its keyhole was clogged with rust. She could force the key and risk breaking it, or leave before the storm flooded the lower platform.

3 Lena pressed the key into the rust and turned slowly. Behind her, the scrape became a rumble, and muddy water spilled from the service tunnel. The lock clicked. Inside, the violin case rested on a shelf above the rising water. Lena seized it and ran upstairs just as the lower platform disappeared beneath the flood. Outside, the red signal lamp glowed steadily. Lena understood that its earlier blink had warned her to hurry, not to enter the tunnel.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What choice creates Lena's main conflict at the storage-room door, and why does that choice create tension?

2. What does Lena's flashback reveal about her grandfather, and how does that information add suspense?

3. Which detail foreshadows danger early in the story? Explain how the ending gives that detail a new meaning.

4. How does the plot move from the beginning through the climax to create suspense?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 4-sentence mini-scene about a character trying to reach an important goal. Include an obstacle and either a flashback or a foreshadowing clue, then write a fifth sentence that names the device and explains how it builds suspense or tension.

ANSWER KEY

Signal in the Rain

GRADE 8 · 8.T.T.1.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline words or actions that show Lena's conflict, circle the flashback, and box the early detail that later becomes a warning. Use your marks to notice how suspense grows. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What choice creates Lena's main conflict at the storage-room door, and why does that choice create tension?	**She can force the rusty lock and risk breaking the key, or leave before the lower platform floods. Either choice could prevent her from getting the violin.**
2	What does Lena's flashback reveal about her grandfather, and how does that information add suspense?	**It reveals that he warned Lena not to go beyond the yellow line near the service tunnel. The warning makes the tunnel seem dangerous and creates uncertainty about the hidden violin.**
3	Which detail foreshadows danger early in the story? Explain how the ending gives that detail a new meaning.	**The red signal lamp blinks and goes dark. At the end, Lena realizes it was warning her to hurry and avoid entering the tunnel.**
4	How does the plot move from the beginning through the climax to create suspense?	**Lena begins with a time-sensitive goal and an unsettling warning. The rusty lock and rising flood increase the danger, and the climax occurs when she opens the door and escapes with the violin as the platform floods.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Milo raced to lock the greenhouse before hail struck the school garden. As he reached for the latch, he remembered his science teacher warning that the roof panels could shatter in heavy wind. A sharp gust swung the door open and scattered seed packets across the floor. He grabbed the latch just as the first hard pellets hit the glass. The flashback builds suspense because readers worry that Milo may not secure the greenhouse before the roof breaks.

Accept equivalent explanations that connect a conflict, plot event, flashback, or foreshadowing clue to suspense or tension. For the open response, accept either narrative device if the student includes a clear goal, obstacle, and effect on the reader.