Greenhouse After Dark

Notice how details and pacing build suspense.

8.T.T.1.e "Apply narrative techniques to enhance writing, engage audiences, and achieve specific purposes. (C)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline sensory details that create a tense setting, circle dialogue or thoughts that reveal the narrator's reaction, and number the short sentences or fragments that speed up the dangerous moment.

The Loose Panel

1 Rain rattled the glass roof of the neighborhood greenhouse as I locked the potting shed. At first, the sound was steady, almost peaceful. Then the lights blinked once and vanished. In the dark, the watering system clicked off, leaving only the sharp smell of wet soil. "Mara?" called Mr. Chen from the far aisle. I lifted my phone, but its battery showed one red bar. Somewhere near the seed trays, metal scraped against metal.

2 I moved toward his voice, stepping around overturned trays. My shoe sank into a puddle. Cold water soaked through my sock. I wanted to run outside, yet Mr. Chen had sounded frightened. "Stay where you are," I said, though my voice shook. A flash of lightning filled the greenhouse. For one second, I saw a loose ventilation panel swinging above him. It slammed shut. The scrape came again, closer this time. My breath caught in my throat.

3 "The panel!" I shouted. Mr. Chen ducked as wind shoved it open again. We crossed the aisle together, each step slower than the last because broken clay pots covered the floor. I grabbed the emergency crank beside the door and turned it. Once. Twice. The panel lowered with a groan, then locked. The rain still hammered the roof, but the scraping stopped. Mr. Chen exhaled. I laughed, surprised by the sound, and finally noticed that my hands were trembling.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the detail that Mara's phone has "one red bar" increase tension in the first paragraph?

2. Choose one sensory detail from the passage. What does it help you imagine or feel?

3. Identify two short sentences or fragments in the last paragraph that speed up the action.

4. How do Mara's thought about wanting to run and her words to Mr. Chen reveal a conflict inside her?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90 to 120 word scene in which a student notices an unusual sound in an empty school hallway. Build suspense using one line of dialogue, at least two sensory details, one thought, and at least two short sentences or fragments to control pacing.

ANSWER KEY

Greenhouse After Dark

GRADE 8 · 8.T.T.1.e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline sensory details that create a tense setting, circle dialogue or thoughts that reveal the narrator's reaction, and number the short sentences or fragments that speed up the dangerous moment. 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's phone has "one red bar" increase tension in the first paragraph?	**It shows that she may soon lose her only light or way to call for help.**
2	Choose one sensory detail from the passage. What does it help you imagine or feel?	**The "sharp smell of wet soil" helps the reader imagine the damp, dark greenhouse setting.**
3	Identify two short sentences or fragments in the last paragraph that speed up the action.	**"Once." and "Twice."**
4	How do Mara's thought about wanting to run and her words to Mr. Chen reveal a conflict inside her?	**She is afraid and wants to escape, but she chooses to help Mr. Chen.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After rehearsal, Nia returned to the school hallway for her forgotten sketchbook. The fluorescent lights buzzed above her, and the air smelled like lemon cleaner. A locker door clicked near the science rooms. She stopped. Too quiet. "Is someone there?" she called. No answer came. Nia pictured the custodian checking rooms, but the footsteps sounded lighter than his heavy boots. Another click. Then a scrape. Her fingers tightened around her backpack strap as she walked toward the sound. Behind a partly open locker, a gray kitten blinked at her and meowed.

Accept equivalent explanations that connect a technique to suspense, character reaction, or pacing and support the response with passage evidence. For the writing task, check for the required length and narrative techniques, along with a clear suspenseful effect.