# Siren at Dusk

Trace how a writer builds urgency through plot and language.

**9.T.T.1.b** "Analyze how plot structures, conflict, narrative devices, word choice, and other craft techniques are impacted by an author's purpose. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Number four plot moments, from the problem to the resolution, underline words that create tension, and circle meaningful repeated words or phrases. Use your marks to explain how the author creates urgency and reveals Mara's responsibility.

### The Library Door

1. At 5:40 p.m., Mara locked the library's side door and heard the town siren begin its low, unbroken moan. Her phone showed one message from her grandfather: Bridge road is flooding. Stay inside. Through the glass, rain erased the parking lot lines, and the creek behind the building had swollen into a brown, rushing wall. Mara remembered that her little brother, Eli, was at soccer practice across the creek. The coach usually drove him home, but the bridge was the only route. She pressed her forehead to the cold window, listening as the siren kept calling.

2. Then the lights blinked out. In the dark, Mara found the emergency flashlight beneath the desk, but its beam shook across the floor because her hand shook too. She could wait for an adult, she told herself. She could wait. Yet a red bicycle flashed in her mind, chained beside the soccer field, and she pictured Eli alone under the metal bleachers. Mara called the coach. No answer. She called again. This time, a voice broke through the static: "We are sheltering in the field house." Mara exhaled, but the creek thundered beyond the wall.

3. Minutes later, Mara used the library's landline to report that the team was safe but cut off from the bridge. She gave the dispatcher the field house location, then stayed by the phone while the rain hammered the roof. At 6:12, the coach called to say that emergency workers had arrived. Mara slid down beside the desk, laughing once, quietly. Outside, the creek still roared, but its sound no longer seemed like a warning meant only for her. She opened the side door when her grandfather arrived, soaked and breathless, and handed him the flashlight.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is one likely purpose of this passage? Explain your answer with details from the story.

2. How do Mara's external and internal conflicts shape the plot from the opening problem to the resolution?

3. Why does the author repeat, “She could wait”? How does this narrative device affect the reader?

4. How do the word choices about the creek change from the beginning to the end? How does that change support the author's purpose?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 5 to 7 sentence scene in which a character faces a time-sensitive problem. Use one repeated phrase and at least two precise sensory word choices, then add one sentence that names your purpose and explains how your structure and word choice support it.

**ANSWER KEY**

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**GRADE 9 · 9.T.T.1.b**

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number four plot moments, from the problem to the resolution, underline words that create tension, and circle meaningful repeated words or phrases. Use your marks to explain how the author creates urgency and reveals Mara's responsibility. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What is one likely purpose of this passage? Explain your answer with details from the story. | **The author likely wants to create urgency while showing Mara acting responsibly during an emergency. The flooding, siren, and Mara's calls for help support this purpose.** |
| 2 | How do Mara's external and internal conflicts shape the plot from the opening problem to the resolution? | **The flood creates an external problem because Eli may be stranded, while Mara's internal conflict is whether to wait or act. Her choice to call the coach and then the dispatcher moves the story toward the team's rescue.** |
| 3 | Why does the author repeat, “She could wait”? How does this narrative device affect the reader? | **The repetition emphasizes Mara's hesitation and makes her decision feel more difficult. It builds suspense because the reader does not yet know whether Eli and the team are safe.** |
| 4 | How do the word choices about the creek change from the beginning to the end? How does that change support the author's purpose? | **At first, the creek is a “brown, rushing wall” that “thundered,” making the danger feel threatening. At the end, it still roars, but Mara no longer hears it as a warning only for her, showing that she has become calmer after taking action.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When the final bell rang, Inez saw smoke curling from the auditorium vent. She could run to the bus. She could run. Instead, she pulled the fire alarm and called the office from the hallway phone. The sharp alarm sliced through the chatter as students moved toward the doors. Outside, she watched the smoke thin while the principal counted each class. My purpose is to build urgency and show Inez choosing responsibility, so the repeated phrase delays her decision and the sharp sensory words make the danger feel immediate.

Accept reasonable statements of purpose when students support them with specific plot, conflict, device, or word-choice evidence. For the open response, look for a clear time-sensitive conflict, purposeful repetition, precise language, and an explanation connecting craft choices to purpose.