Before Friday

How a narrative opening establishes stakes and competing views

11-12.W.3.a "Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the problem and one detail that shows why it matters. Circle the narrator and two other characters, then write 1 and 2 beside lines that reveal two different views of what should happen next.

The Greenhouse Notice

1 On Monday morning, a yellow notice hung from the locked greenhouse door: DEMOLITION BEGINS FRIDAY. I had come to photograph our biology seedlings before first period, but the door was chained and a pane of glass lay in pieces behind it. Through the cloudy walls, I could see the tomato plants we had started from seed in March. Our class was supposed to measure their growth for the rest of the semester. I raised my phone, then lowered it. A photograph would prove the plants were still there, but it would not tell me who had decided they were already lost.

2 Imani arrived carrying the notebook where she recorded each plant's height. She read the notice twice and stopped several steps from the broken glass. “We can move them,” she said. “The data doesn't have to end here.” Mr. Alvarez, the school groundskeeper, stopped beside us with a coil of caution tape. He pointed to a second cracked pane above the door. “Nobody goes inside until it's safe,” he said. “I've asked for repairs since winter.” Imani looked at her notebook as if the numbers inside it might settle the argument.

3 I had spent months complaining that the greenhouse smelled like wet soil and old plastic. Now the notice made the place look different: it was a classroom we might lose before we had finished using it. Still, I could not ignore the broken glass over the doorway. At lunch, the principal would hear proposals for what to do with the plants before demolition began. Imani wanted to request a supervised move; Mr. Alvarez wanted the building closed to everyone until an inspection. I opened a blank page in my notebook, unsure which problem to write down first.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the notice and the locked door establish the immediate problem? Why is the notice urgent?

2. What details show why losing the greenhouse matters to the narrator, despite earlier complaints about it?

3. What does Imani want to do, and what does Mr. Alvarez want to do first? Which detail helps explain each view?

4. How do the narrator's last action and thought establish a point of view without settling the problem?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 6- to 8-sentence opening to an original narrative about a place or event at risk of changing. Establish the immediate problem and why it matters, introduce a first-person narrator and another character with a different priority, and stop before the problem is solved.

Before Friday

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the problem and one detail that shows why it matters. Circle the narrator and two other characters, then write 1 and 2 beside lines that reveal two different views of what should happen next. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the notice and the locked door establish the immediate problem? Why is the notice urgent?	**The greenhouse is locked and marked for demolition, so the class cannot reach its plants. Demolition is set to begin Friday.**
2	What details show why losing the greenhouse matters to the narrator, despite earlier complaints about it?	**The narrator helped start the tomato plants from seed, and the class was supposed to keep measuring their growth. The narrator now sees the greenhouse as an unfinished classroom, not just an unpleasant place.**
3	What does Imani want to do, and what does Mr. Alvarez want to do first? Which detail helps explain each view?	**Imani wants a supervised move so the plants and their growth data can be saved. Mr. Alvarez wants the building closed until an inspection because panes are cracked and he considers entry unsafe.**
4	How do the narrator's last action and thought establish a point of view without settling the problem?	**The narrator opens a notebook to consider what to say but does not know whether to focus first on saving the plants or addressing the danger.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At 8:15, the lights went out in the recreation center, an hour before the neighborhood chess tournament. I had spent six Saturdays teaching the youngest players how to record their moves, and several had invited their families to watch. When I reached for the wall switch, the room stayed dark. Ms. Chen, the director, stood by the entrance with a flashlight and said the event could not begin without working emergency lights. My friend Malik wanted to set up boards on the sidewalk while the morning was clear. I pictured the folding tables wobbling beside the traffic, then pictured the players waiting at home. Ms. Chen asked what I thought, and for once I had no quick answer.

Accept different marked details when students can explain how those details establish the problem, its significance, or a character's view. For the original opening, look for a clear stake, distinct priorities, and an unresolved situation.