Set the Scene

Read a narrative opening, then create one of your own.

4.W.3.a "Establish an introduction with context to allow the reader to imagine the world of the event or experience."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the words in the first paragraph that show when and where the event begins. Circle two other details that help you picture or feel the place.

The First Harvest

1 On Saturday morning, the school garden smelled of wet soil and mint. Last night's rain had left drops on the bean leaves, and our sneakers sank into the soft path. Families were arriving for the garden's first harvest day. I stood beside the pumpkin patch with a pair of scissors in my hand. In a few minutes, I would cut the ribbon and welcome everyone inside.

2 My little brother tugged my sleeve. "Will you say something first?" he whispered. I had practiced one sentence at home, but now it seemed to have slipped away. Behind the gate, Mrs. Lee held up the ribbon between two wooden posts. Our principal nodded to me. I could hear a wheelbarrow bumping along the path as more families came toward us.

3 I took one breath and looked at the garden we had planted in spring. The pumpkins were small, but their bright skins stood out against the dark leaves. "Welcome to our first harvest!" I called. My voice shook at first, then grew louder. I cut the ribbon, and the families stepped through the gate. My brother raced ahead to find the biggest pumpkin.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which words in the opening tell you when and where the event begins?

2. Name two details in the opening that help you picture or feel the garden.

3. What is about to happen? Which detail in the opening shows the narrator's part in it?

4. How does the detail about the sinking sneakers help you imagine the setting? Use another clue from the opening.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Think of a real or imagined event that begins somewhere other than a garden. Write an introduction of 4 to 5 sentences that tells when and where it happens, adds two details that help a reader picture or feel the place, and hints at what is about to happen.

ANSWER KEY

Set the Scene

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the words in the first paragraph that show when and where the event begins. Circle two other details that help you picture or feel the place. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which words in the opening tell you when and where the event begins?	**"On Saturday morning" and "the school garden."**
2	Name two details in the opening that help you picture or feel the garden.	**The garden smells of wet soil and mint, and sneakers sink into the soft path.**
3	What is about to happen? Which detail in the opening shows the narrator's part in it?	**The garden's first harvest day is about to begin. The narrator holds scissors and will cut the ribbon.**
4	How does the detail about the sinking sneakers help you imagine the setting? Use another clue from the opening.	**It helps the reader feel how soft and wet the path is after last night's rain.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Just before sunset, I stood in the crowded school gym for my first spelling bee. Sneakers squeaked on the shiny floor, and the hot lights made my neck itch. A row of folding chairs faced a microphone at the front of the room. When the judge called my name, I pressed my hands together and took a step forward.

For the marking job and question 2, accept any two concrete details from the first paragraph that help establish the setting. For Your Turn, look for a clear time and place, at least two setting details, and a hint of the coming event.