The Blue Ribbon

Read how details and comparisons shape a story.

5.RC.14 "Determine how words and phrases provide meaning to works of literature, including imagery, symbolism, and figurative language (e.g., similes, metaphors, hyperbole, or allusion)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail you can picture or hear, circle the phrases that compare the narrator's knees and the audience to other things, and number each mention of the blue ribbon.

The First Note

1. The night of the school concert, I waited behind the curtain with my violin. Dust drifted through a stripe of yellow stage light. My knees rattled like spoons in a drawer. In my pocket was a blue ribbon from Grandma, tied in a small loop. She had worn it at her first concert. "Keep it close," she had told me. "You can be scared and still play."

2. When the curtain opened, the room became a sea of faces. I could not find Grandma anywhere. My fingers froze on the strings, and the first note scraped out like a rusty gate. Then I felt the ribbon's soft knot inside my pocket. I pictured Grandma at my age, standing under bright lights with the same shaky hands. I drew one slow breath and began again.

3. The next notes rose steadily, filling the hall like birds calling across a yard. At last I spotted Grandma in the back row. She pressed her hand to her heart. When the music ended, I held the blue ribbon in my palm. It had not played a single note for me. Still, it reminded me that Grandma had once faced this same fear and kept going.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the detail about dust in the stage light help you picture where the narrator is waiting?

2. What does "My knees rattled like spoons in a drawer" tell you about how the narrator feels?

3. Why might the narrator describe the audience as "a sea of faces" instead of simply saying there are people in the room?

4. What does the blue ribbon come to mean to the narrator? Use a detail from the story to explain.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine the narrator walks onstage for a second concert. Write two sentences: one with a new simile about a sound or feeling, and one explaining what your simile helps the reader understand.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 5 · 5.RC.14

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail you can picture or hear, circle the phrases that compare the narrator's knees and the audience to other things, and number each mention of the blue ribbon. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the detail about dust in the stage light help you picture where the narrator is waiting?	**It helps the reader picture a lit stage just beyond the curtain.**
2	What does "My knees rattled like spoons in a drawer" tell you about how the narrator feels?	**The simile shows that the narrator is so nervous that their knees are shaking.**
3	Why might the narrator describe the audience as "a sea of faces" instead of simply saying there are people in the room?	**The metaphor makes the audience seem large and overwhelming to the narrator.**
4	What does the blue ribbon come to mean to the narrator? Use a detail from the story to explain.	**The ribbon represents Grandma's support and courage. It reminds the narrator that Grandma felt scared at her first concert but played anyway.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The violins hummed like bees waking in the sun. This simile helps the reader hear a gentle, busy sound as the concert begins.

Accept other text-supported explanations of the imagery, comparisons, and ribbon. For Your Turn, look for an original simile and an explanation that matches it.