Behind the Curtain

Trace how a turning point shapes a story's meaning

6.RC.3 "Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a work of literature and contributes to the development of the theme, characterization, setting, or plot."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the paragraphs 1 to 3, circle the narrator's words that show she resists help, and underline the sentence where her approach changes so you can trace how the story develops.

The Cardboard Moon

1 The curtain at the Harbor Street theater stuck halfway up, hiding the cardboard moon we had painted for our play. I was in charge of the curtain, so I pulled its cord again while the audience found their seats. The rope burned my palms, but nothing moved. My friend Jo held up the moon and asked if I wanted help. “I've got it,” I said. I pictured everyone staring at me if they learned I could not manage one simple job.

2 Behind the stage, I spotted the trouble: the cord had slipped off a wooden wheel near the floor. I tried to guide it back while tugging the rope, but each pull knocked it loose again. Voices rose on the other side of the curtain. Then I stopped pulling and called to the others. Jo held the wheel steady, Luis guided the cord into its groove, and I gave the rope one slow pull. The curtain lifted, and the cardboard moon rose above the stage.

3 The audience clapped when they saw the moon, though they had no idea what had happened behind the curtain. Jo grinned at me from beside the painted trees. During the play, I noticed Luis checking the cord before each scene, and I checked it too. After our final bow, I thanked them both for helping. The rope had not grown lighter, and the wheel had not fixed itself. I used to think being brave meant doing everything alone; now I knew it could mean asking someone to stand beside me.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does “I was in charge of the curtain” help you understand why the narrator first refuses Jo's help?

2. How does “I've got it” prepare you for the change in the second paragraph?

3. Why is “Then I stopped pulling and called to the others” a turning point in the plot?

4. How does the final sentence give the curtain problem a larger meaning? Include an earlier action as evidence.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a different final sentence for the story that shifts its message or what it shows about the narrator. Then write two sentences explaining the shift, using an earlier detail from the story as evidence.

ANSWER KEY

Behind the Curtain

GRADE 6 · 6.RC.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the paragraphs 1 to 3, circle the narrator's words that show she resists help, and underline the sentence where her approach changes so you can trace how the story develops. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does “I was in charge of the curtain” help you understand why the narrator first refuses Jo's help?	**She feels responsible for fixing the curtain and worries that others will judge her if she cannot do it alone.**
2	How does “I've got it” prepare you for the change in the second paragraph?	**It shows that the narrator refuses help at first, making her later decision to call the others a clear change.**
3	Why is “Then I stopped pulling and called to the others” a turning point in the plot?	**Before this sentence, the narrator's attempts keep failing. After she calls the others, they work together and raise the curtain.**
4	How does the final sentence give the curtain problem a larger meaning? Include an earlier action as evidence.	**The final sentence shows that asking for help can be brave. The narrator calls Jo and Luis after failing to fix the curtain alone.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before every show after that, I checked the curtain cord twice. This ending shifts the focus from asking for help to preparing carefully. Earlier, the cord had slipped off the wheel, and Luis checked it before each scene.

Accept answers that explain how a specific sentence affects the plot, the narrator, or the story's message and support the explanation with passage evidence. For Your Turn, the new ending should create a clear shift that the student explains.