Behind the Mural

Trace how a narrator's view changes as new evidence appears.

7.RC "Students analyze the author's technique, structure, main ideas, purpose, and perspective in grade-level fiction and nonfiction text, using textual evidence to support analysis."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that shape the narrator's first opinion of Mr. Vega. Circle two later details that challenge that opinion, and number the details in the order they appear.

The Silver Fish

1. On Monday, the blue wave on our school courtyard wall disappeared beneath gray dust. Last spring, my class had painted it after studying the creek behind the soccer field. I watched Mr. Vega scrape away the tiny silver fish I had added near the corner. He did not look up when I walked past. By lunch, I had written a petition in my notebook: Save Our Mural. I left a blank space for signatures, certain everyone would understand what he had done.

2. The next morning, rain traced a dark line below the courtyard windows. A patch of plaster crumbled where the fish had been. Mr. Vega set down his scraper and pointed to a crack along the sill. Water had slipped through it for months, he said, and the wall was crumbling beneath our paint. He had to remove the damaged plaster before the crack could be repaired. I looked at the petition folded in my pocket. I had watched his scraper, but not the wall behind it.

3. By Friday, the crack was patched and the wall stood bare. Mr. Vega showed our art club a stack of wooden panels for the courtyard fence. They could be taken down when they needed repair. He asked whether we wanted to paint them. I unfolded the petition, turned it over, and sketched a new wave on the back. I kept one silver fish in the corner, but I added a thin gray line beneath it. From a distance, it looked like a shadow. Up close, it looked like a crack we had finally noticed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. At first, what does the narrator believe Mr. Vega is doing? Use one detail from the first paragraph to explain that belief.

2. Why does the author wait until the second paragraph to explain the crack? Describe how that choice affects your view of Mr. Vega.

3. The silver fish appears in both the first and last paragraphs. How does its meaning change? Support your answer with a detail from each paragraph.

4. What idea does the author develop about making judgments? Explain how the narrator's actions at the end support that idea.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence scene from Mr. Vega's point of view on Monday as the narrator walks past. Include two details from the passage and one thought the narrator could not know, then add one sentence explaining how this perspective changes a reader's understanding of his actions.

ANSWER KEY

Behind the Mural

GRADE 7 · 7.RC

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that shape the narrator's first opinion of Mr. Vega. Circle two later details that challenge that opinion, and number the details in the order they appear. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	At first, what does the narrator believe Mr. Vega is doing? Use one detail from the first paragraph to explain that belief.	**The narrator believes Mr. Vega is needlessly destroying the mural. The narrator writes a petition called "Save Our Mural" after seeing him scrape away the silver fish.**
2	Why does the author wait until the second paragraph to explain the crack? Describe how that choice affects your view of Mr. Vega.	**The delay lets readers share the narrator's first judgment. Learning that water has damaged the plaster changes Mr. Vega's scraping from an act of destruction to a necessary repair.**
3	The silver fish appears in both the first and last paragraphs. How does its meaning change? Support your answer with a detail from each paragraph.	**At first, the fish represents artwork the narrator wants to save when Mr. Vega scrapes it away. At the end, the narrator draws it beside a gray line, showing that the new artwork will acknowledge the damage.**
4	What idea does the author develop about making judgments? Explain how the narrator's actions at the end support that idea.	**The story suggests that people should look for what they have missed before judging someone's actions. After learning about the damaged wall, the narrator turns over the petition and sketches a new design.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Gray dust fell as I scraped the silver fish from the courtyard wall. The student who had painted it walked past, and I could not bring myself to look up. I knew the crumbling plaster beneath the paint had to come off before anyone could repair the crack. I hoped the art club would want to paint the wooden panels I had set aside for the fence. Mr. Vega's perspective shows that he regrets losing the mural even as he works to repair the wall.

Accept evidence-based interpretations of the narrator's changing view. For Part 3, the added thought may be invented, but it must fit Mr. Vega's actions and the passage's facts.