The Locked Platform

Study how a story opening brings readers into a scene.

7.W.3.a "Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that establish when and where the scene begins, circle the names of the narrator and another character, and put a star beside a clue to the narrator's point of view.

The Station Bell

1 The lights went out just as I reached the museum's storage room. It was Friday evening, and rain rattled against the high windows of the old train station that housed the museum. I had promised to help my older brother, Theo, pack exhibits for the town festival. Now every glass case reflected only the thin beam from my phone. Somewhere beyond the shelves, a bell gave a single sharp ring. The station's bell had not worked in decades, according to the sign by the front door.

2 Theo appeared at the end of the aisle, holding a cardboard box of ticket stubs. “Mara, did you hear that?” he whispered. I nodded, though I wanted to pretend the sound came from the storm. Theo loved old machines and knew every switch in the building; I could barely tell a signal lamp from a flashlight. He pointed toward a locked door marked PLATFORM ACCESS. A line of water crept from beneath it, carrying a small brass key across the floor toward my sneakers.

3 I picked up the key by its cold, square handle. A paper tag hung from it, but the ink had blurred into a gray smudge. Theo crouched beside me and aimed his flashlight at the door. Behind it, something scraped against wood, slow and heavy. “We should call the caretaker,” he said. That was the sensible plan. Still, I slipped the key into my pocket. If the water kept rising, we might need to open that door before anyone arrived.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which details tell you when and where the story begins?

2. Who tells the story? Give one clue that shows whose point of view you are reading.

3. What do you learn about Theo, and how does that help you understand Mara's position in the scene?

4. How does Mara's response to the key hint at trouble ahead? Use one detail from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write the opening of a different story in 5 to 7 sentences. Use a first-person narrator who is named, introduce another character, establish when and where they are, and end with a hint of trouble without solving it.

ANSWER KEY

The Locked Platform

GRADE 7 · 7.W.3.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that establish when and where the scene begins, circle the names of the narrator and another character, and put a star beside a clue to the narrator's point of view. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which details tell you when and where the story begins?	**It is Friday evening in a museum housed in an old train station.**
2	Who tells the story? Give one clue that shows whose point of view you are reading.	**Mara tells the story. She uses "I," and Theo calls her "Mara."**
3	What do you learn about Theo, and how does that help you understand Mara's position in the scene?	**Theo is Mara's older brother and knows the building's old machines. Mara knows less about them, so she may need his help.**
4	How does Mara's response to the key hint at trouble ahead? Use one detail from the passage.	**Mara pockets the key even though she agrees that calling the caretaker is sensible. Rising water may force her to open the locked door.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On Tuesday morning, I stood behind the school gym with my cousin Lina, waiting for the robotics meet to begin. The air smelled of wet pavement, and our robot sat in a crate between us. "Nico, hurry," Lina said, checking the clock. I searched my bag for the control tablet as a strange beep came from inside the crate. I lifted the lid and saw a red light blinking where no light should be. Lina reached for the power switch, but I grabbed her wrist. The robot had started moving on its own.

Accept different quoted clues to first-person point of view, such as "I nodded" or "my sneakers." For the open response, check that the narrator's name is clear, the setting and second character are introduced, and the trouble remains unresolved.