The Missing Money

Notice how an opening introduces a problem and competing points of view.

9-10.W.3.a "Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the problem Leila faces, circle the words that identify her and two other characters, and number two details that show different explanations for the empty box.

Before the First Bell

1. At 7:12 on Friday morning, the glass donation box outside the school auditorium was empty. Wednesday's spring concert had raised nearly two thousand dollars for new music stands, or so the student council's tally said. I stood beside the box with my notebook open, trying to decide what to write for the school paper. My name is Leila, and I had promised our editor a story before lunch. A white square of tape clung to the lid where the seal should have been. In the hallway, a poster still read, ALL PROCEEDS TO THE ORCHESTRA.

2. Theo, the concert's stage manager, arrived carrying a coil of cables. He pointed at the loose tape and said someone must have opened the box after the concert. To him, the missing cash was a theft, and every minute without an announcement gave the thief time to disappear. I understood his anger, but the tally was not a bank record, and no one had checked whether the money had been collected by an adult. When I asked Theo who last saw the box full, he looked toward the office instead of answering.

3. At the office door, Ms. Chen, the school bookkeeper, read my draft headline over my shoulder: CONCERT CASH STOLEN. She said she had given the cash to the district cashier on Thursday and that it was now in a district account. She offered to look for a receipt after her first class, but she had none with her. Theo wanted me to publish the headline anyway. I crossed out STOLEN and wrote MISSING, then waited by the office clock as the first bell rang. The money might be safe, but I could not yet prove it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What problem does Leila encounter in the opening, before anyone offers an explanation?

2. How does Leila's view of the empty box differ from Theo's?

3. What explanation does Ms. Chen offer, and why does it leave the situation uncertain?

4. How does Leila's headline change help readers understand her point of view?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 5- to 7-sentence opening set in a place you choose. Introduce a first-person narrator and two other characters who interpret one problem differently, and leave the problem unsolved.

The Missing Money

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the problem Leila faces, circle the words that identify her and two other characters, and number two details that show different explanations for the empty box. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What problem does Leila encounter in the opening, before anyone offers an explanation?	**The donation box is empty, although the concert reportedly raised nearly two thousand dollars.**
2	How does Leila's view of the empty box differ from Theo's?	**Theo believes someone stole the cash. Leila is concerned but wants to check whether an adult collected it before calling it theft.**
3	What explanation does Ms. Chen offer, and why does it leave the situation uncertain?	**Ms. Chen says she gave the cash to the district cashier, but she has no receipt with her. Her claim makes the theft headline uncertain, not disproved.**
4	How does Leila's headline change help readers understand her point of view?	**Changing STOLEN to MISSING shows that Leila will not present theft as a fact while the competing explanations remain unverified.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The greenhouse door stood open, and every seed tray on the front bench was overturned. I gripped the damp handle, certain our class project would miss the science fair. My lab partner, Nia, blamed the wind that had rattled the windows all night. Mr. Vale, the custodian, pointed to muddy shoe prints beneath the bench and said someone had come inside. I wanted to trust Nia, but the prints led toward the locked supply closet. When the bell rang, none of us had touched the closet door.

For the marking job, accept the empty box or missing money as the problem and details that distinguish Theo's theft theory from Ms. Chen's account. For the writing task, look for a clear problem, a first-person narrator, two characters with different interpretations, and an unresolved ending.