The Pumpkin Chase

Notice how exact words make an action scene vivid.

C.7.3.e "Use precise words, relevant descriptive details and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three precise action verbs and circle two sensory details that help you picture the runaway pumpkin.

A Close Catch

1 At the Saturday market, I reached for a pumpkin on the top of our display. My sleeve caught the edge of the wooden crate. It tipped, and the pumpkin bumped onto the sidewalk with a hollow thock. For one still second, it rested against my shoe. Then a delivery truck rattled past, and I stepped back. The pumpkin slipped free and rolled down the sloping sidewalk. I smelled cinnamon from the bakery as I darted between two shoppers, calling, "Watch your feet!"

2 Its stem scraped the pavement as it picked up speed. A woman lifted her grocery bag just before the pumpkin whisked beneath it. I lunged, but my fingers brushed only the rough, dusty rind. Ahead, the sidewalk ended at a curb beside a storm drain. The pumpkin wobbled toward the gap, and I pictured it cracking against the metal grate. I cut across the grass, my sneakers skidding on damp leaves. At the curb, I planted one foot and stretched both hands toward the rolling orange blur.

3 The pumpkin struck my palms with a solid smack. Its weight shoved me backward, but I tucked it against my chest and stayed upright. The ridges pressed through my shirt, and cool mud streaked my wrist. Behind me, the woman with the grocery bag laughed and called, "Nice catch!" I carried the pumpkin uphill, breathing hard. Back at the stand, I set it in an empty crate on the ground. This time, I made sure the crate sat flat before I reached for another pumpkin.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which verb shows how the pumpkin first landed on the sidewalk? What movement does it suggest?

2. What sound does the pumpkin make when it leaves the crate? How does that detail help you imagine the landing?

3. Name two details that help you feel what catching the pumpkin was like. What does each detail convey?

4. Why is "skidding" more precise than "moving" for the narrator's sneakers on the damp leaves?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 5- to 7-sentence scene in which you catch something falling indoors. Use at least three precise action verbs and two sensory details to show what happens.

ANSWER KEY

The Pumpkin Chase

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three precise action verbs and circle two sensory details that help you picture the runaway pumpkin. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which verb shows how the pumpkin first landed on the sidewalk? What movement does it suggest?	**"Bumped" suggests a short jolt as the pumpkin landed.**
2	What sound does the pumpkin make when it leaves the crate? How does that detail help you imagine the landing?	**It makes a "hollow thock," which helps the reader hear it hit the sidewalk.**
3	Name two details that help you feel what catching the pumpkin was like. What does each detail convey?	**Its weight shoves the narrator backward, showing the force of the catch. Its ridges press through the narrator's shirt, showing how the pumpkin feels.**
4	Why is "skidding" more precise than "moving" for the narrator's sneakers on the damp leaves?	**"Skidding" shows that the sneakers slide and the narrator has trouble keeping steady.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In the kitchen, a lemon slipped from the edge of the counter. It bounced off a cabinet handle and dropped toward the tile. I lunged forward, my socks sliding on the cool floor. Its dimpled peel scraped my fingers, leaving a sharp citrus smell. I scooped it up before it struck the tile. Its weight settled into my palm, and I let out a shaky breath.

For Part 1, accept any three precise action verbs and two sensory details from the passage. For Part 3, look for a clear sequence of action, at least three precise action verbs, and two sensory details.