When Plans Change

Trace how a narrator turns a problem into a sequence of events.

C.8.3.b "Engage the reader by setting out a problem, situation or observation, establishing a point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the opening problem, circle two details that show how the narrator feels, and number three actions that move the event toward a solution.

Poetry Without a Microphone

1. Five minutes before our library's poetry night, the microphone squealed once and went silent. Thirty people were already unfolding chairs beneath the paper stars we had hung from the ceiling. I was supposed to introduce the readers, not solve a sound problem, and my hands felt slick against the clipboard. Nia, our first poet, whispered, "My grandmother came. She has trouble hearing." I looked at the farthest chairs, then at the small reading table. If we started as planned, half the room might miss every word.

2. I asked Mr. Chen, the librarian, to test the speaker while I carried the reading table closer to the audience. He tried another outlet, but the speaker stayed silent. Instead of waiting for a repair, I asked everyone to pull their chairs into a tight semicircle. Nia held her notebook against her chest as the chairs scraped forward. I stood at the back and asked her to try her first line. Her voice reached me, though the last word faded beneath the hum of the air conditioner.

3. I moved beside Nia and suggested she face the back row and pause between lines. On her second try, her words traveled clearly past the reading table. Mr. Chen opened the door for two late arrivals, then guided them into the semicircle. When Nia read her poem for real, her grandmother leaned forward and nodded at the final line. I stopped gripping my clipboard. The speaker was still silent, but the room had changed shape around Nia's voice, and nobody had to ask what she had said.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What problem draws you into the story, and what detail makes that problem matter to Nia?

2. How does the narrator's point of view shape the opening? Use one detail about the narrator's thoughts or feelings.

3. Why does the narrator ask the audience to move their chairs after Mr. Chen tests the speaker?

4. How does the final paragraph show that the problem has changed, even though the speaker is still silent?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a six-sentence scene about a plan that goes wrong in a place other than a library. Introduce a narrator and another character, show how the narrator feels, and connect the actions in order so the ending shows what changed.

ANSWER KEY

When Plans Change

GRADE 8 · C.8.3.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the opening problem, circle two details that show how the narrator feels, and number three actions that move the event toward a solution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What problem draws you into the story, and what detail makes that problem matter to Nia?	**The microphone stops working just before poetry night. Nia's grandmother has trouble hearing, so she might miss Nia's poem.**
2	How does the narrator's point of view shape the opening? Use one detail about the narrator's thoughts or feelings.	**The narrator feels responsible and nervous. Their hands feel slick against the clipboard as they worry that people will miss the poems.**
3	Why does the narrator ask the audience to move their chairs after Mr. Chen tests the speaker?	**The speaker stays silent even after Mr. Chen tries another outlet, so the narrator brings the audience closer to hear without it.**
4	How does the final paragraph show that the problem has changed, even though the speaker is still silent?	**Nia faces the listeners and pauses between lines. Her grandmother nods at the end, showing that she heard the poem.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The gate to our community garden jammed just as the youngest volunteers arrived with trays of seedlings. I had promised my neighbor Luis that we would finish planting before the afternoon heat, and I could already feel the sun on my neck. Luis tried the latch, but it would not lift, so I called the garden coordinator instead of pulling harder. She showed us a second entrance around the fence. We carried the seedlings through it, then planted the smallest ones first. When the last tray was empty, Luis shut the second gate behind us, and I finally stopped watching the clock.

Accept different marked actions if students number them in passage order and they help move the event toward a solution. For the scene, look for an opening problem, a clear narrator's perspective, another character, connected actions, and a changed situation at the end.