Before the First Line

Read how sensory details make a stage scene vivid.

C.9-10.3.f "sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting and/or characters."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail for each of four different senses, then label the senses in the margin to show how the scene comes alive.

The Cue Light

1. From the wings, Leena watched the empty doorway at center stage. A strip of blue light cut across the painted floor, stopping just short of her shoes. The air smelled of dust and warm fabric from the heavy curtain. Beyond it, the audience settled with a soft rustle; a chair creaked somewhere in the front row. Leena pressed her palm to the rough brick wall. The edge of her costume's brass button felt cold against her thumb. In thirty seconds she would walk into the light and speak the first line of the play. She could still turn around.

2. The cue light blinked. Leena stepped onstage, and her shoe caught the lip of a loose floorboard. She stumbled but grabbed the wooden doorframe before she fell. Her brass button clicked against it, a small, sharp sound that seemed louder than the audience's rustling. The frame smelled faintly of fresh paint. Under her fingers, a ridge of dried paint scratched her skin. For a breath, she stared at the blue strip of light and forgot her line. Then she noticed the actor across the stage holding a paper cup of lemon water, his hand trembling just enough to make the water quiver.

3. Leena took a slow breath. The paint smell faded behind the citrus scent rising from the cup as the other actor moved closer. She heard the water tap against its paper sides. That tiny sound gave her a place to begin: her character had come to ask for a drink. Leena let go of the doorframe and reached toward the cup. "Is there enough for me?" she asked. Her voice carried to the back wall, steady now. A warm patch of light touched her cheek, and the other actor lifted the cup as if the question had been his cue all along.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which detail about the wall lets you feel Leena's waiting place through touch?

2. What sound does Leena make onstage when she stumbles, and what does its sharpness suggest about the moment?

3. How does the description of the other actor's cup suggest that he may be nervous too?

4. How do the lemon scent and the sound of water help bring Leena back into the scene?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 100 word scene in which a character enters a place they have never been before. Use details from at least three different senses, and show a change in the character's feelings through those details.

Before the First Line

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail for each of four different senses, then label the senses in the margin to show how the scene comes alive. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which detail about the wall lets you feel Leena's waiting place through touch?	**Leena presses her palm against the rough brick wall.**
2	What sound does Leena make onstage when she stumbles, and what does its sharpness suggest about the moment?	**Her brass button clicks against the doorframe. The sharp sound makes her stumble feel sudden and noticeable.**
3	How does the description of the other actor's cup suggest that he may be nervous too?	**His hand trembles enough to make the water quiver.**
4	How do the lemon scent and the sound of water help bring Leena back into the scene?	**The citrus scent draws her attention from the painted doorframe to the cup. The water tapping against the cup gives her a place to begin her line about asking for a drink.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mara pushed open the greenhouse door and stopped. Damp heat wrapped around her arms, and the glass walls glowed pale green above crowded shelves. Somewhere behind the leaves, water dripped into a metal tray. The sharp smell of crushed mint made her think of the garden her grandfather had kept. She had expected this unfamiliar place to feel lonely. Instead, she brushed a fuzzy leaf with one finger and heard a gardener humming at the far end of the aisle. Her shoulders relaxed as she stepped farther in, letting the door swing shut behind her.

Accept different sensory details for the marking job if each comes from a distinct sense. For Part 3, look for an 80 to 100 word scene with at least three senses and a change in feeling conveyed through the details.