The Last Broadcast

Trace how a writer changes our understanding of a relationship.

RL.11-12.3 "Analyze the impact of the author's choices over the course of a text regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one action or line of dialogue in each paragraph that changes how you understand Nora and Ben, then number your choices 1 to 3 to trace the shift.

Still Plugged In

1 On the radio station's last evening, Nora found her brother Ben beside the silent microphone. The station board had voted to sell the building, and Ben had supported the sale; she had not answered his calls since. He was turning a cassette over in his hands, hiding its label with his thumb. Nora took an empty box from the shelf. "I'll pack the records," she said. Ben nodded but did not move. Through the open window came the scrape of workers dragging chairs into a truck. Between each scrape, the old equipment gave off a steady hum.

2 Ben set the cassette in the player. A girl's voice burst from the speakers: "This is Nora, reporting from the world's smallest weather desk." Twelve-year-old Nora stumbled over the next sentence; then a younger Ben whispered, "Take your time." She remembered the broadcast now, but not the way he had waited through her silence. Ben watched the tape turn instead of watching her. "I kept this one," he said. "You sounded like you thought people would listen." Nora touched the box's cardboard edge. The hum, which had seemed to press against her ears, faded beneath the sound of her own uneven voice.

3 The tape clicked off. Nora looked at the rows of records she had planned to carry home, then at the empty shelf where the cassette had been. "The town archive might want these," she said. "Both our names should go on the list." Ben pulled a pen from his pocket and held it out, uncapped. Neither mentioned the vote or asked the other to change a mind. As they wrote titles on the box, the workers shut the truck doors outside. The microphone remained dark, but its cord lay across the table between them, still plugged in.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the writer hide the cassette's contents until the second paragraph? Explain how the recording changes your first impression of Ben.

2. How does the writer's description of the equipment's hum change from the first paragraph to the second? What does that change suggest about Nora?

3. How do young Ben's words on the recording and adult Ben's comment work together to develop his relationship with Nora?

4. At the end, the sale is still going ahead. How do Nora's suggestion about the archive and Ben's response change their relationship without resolving that disagreement?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence alternative ending from Ben's point of view. Keep the sale in place, use one object or sound already in the story, and show a change in how he relates to Nora without naming his feelings. Add one sentence explaining how your chosen detail reveals that change.

ANSWER KEY

The Last Broadcast

HIGH SCHOOL · RL.11-12.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one action or line of dialogue in each paragraph that changes how you understand Nora and Ben, then number your choices 1 to 3 to trace the shift. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the writer hide the cassette's contents until the second paragraph? Explain how the recording changes your first impression of Ben.	**Hiding the contents makes Ben's grip on the cassette seem secretive at first. The recording then reveals that he has kept a memory of supporting Nora, making him more sympathetic.**
2	How does the writer's description of the equipment's hum change from the first paragraph to the second? What does that change suggest about Nora?	**At first, the hum fills the uncomfortable pauses between the siblings. Later, Nora's recorded voice seems to drown it out, suggesting that the memory has drawn her attention away from their tense surroundings.**
3	How do young Ben's words on the recording and adult Ben's comment work together to develop his relationship with Nora?	**Young Ben gives Nora time to finish speaking, and adult Ben remembers her voice with admiration. Together, the moments show that he has valued her for years, even during their current conflict.**
4	At the end, the sale is still going ahead. How do Nora's suggestion about the archive and Ben's response change their relationship without resolving that disagreement?	**Nora proposes preserving the records under both their names, and Ben offers her a pen. They begin working together even though neither changes their position on the sale.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I heard the truck doors slam while Nora wrote our names on the box. I slid the cassette beside her hand instead of putting it back in my pocket. When she asked for the date, I leaned over and checked the label with her. Sharing the cassette shows that Ben now treats Nora as a partner, even though the sale is going ahead.

Accept interpretations grounded in the passage's sequence of details and the siblings' actions. For the alternative ending, look for Ben's point of view, an unchanged sale, a reused detail, an indirect sign of change, and a separate sentence explaining that detail.