The Streetcar Bell

Two imagined voices from a changing American city

RL.11-12.9 "Demonstrate knowledge of various time periods to analyze how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a detail about the streetcar in each scene. Circle one detail in each scene that shows how life in 1910 affects the character's choices.

Two Rides Through 1910

1 These two imagined scenes take place in a U.S. city in 1910. Electric streetcars carried riders between growing neighborhoods and downtown streets. A ride often cost five cents, though fares differed by city and company. New routes could make jobs and classes easier to reach, while the tracks also drew shops and new housing. Many workers depended on hourly or daily pay, and families made careful choices about fares and rent. Both speakers live near a newly extended line, but neither can see the other's day. Each tells a small part of the city's story.

2 Scene A. At dusk, Clara laid her needle beside the last finished collar. The streetcar bell rang below her window, sharp as a spoon against glass. Before the tracks reached our block, she thought, the night school's arithmetic lessons were too far away after work. She put a nickel in her glove and boarded. At the next stop, she saw the factory windows still glowing, yet for once she was moving toward a room where she could learn something no foreman had assigned. She held the rail as the car lurched forward and smiled at the unmarked notebook in her pocket.

3 Scene B. At dusk, Tomas counted the coins from a day unloading crates. Across the street, a bell called out as the car rolled past the house he once rented. Since the tracks arrived, the landlord had raised the rent, and Tomas's family had moved three blocks farther away. The new line could carry him to the docks in half the time it took to walk, but a nickel each way would take too much from supper money. He watched the car's bright windows glide toward the harbor, then tightened his coat and started after it on foot.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the streetcar bell signal a different possibility to Clara and Tomas? Use a detail from each scene.

2. Both scenes mention a nickel fare. How does this shared detail change each character's access to the streetcar?

3. Compare one benefit and one cost of the expanding streetcar line across the two scenes. How does each affect a character's choices?

4. Compare the scenes' final images of movement. What different views of change in 1910 do they suggest?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In one paragraph of five or six sentences, compare how work shapes Clara's and Tomas's control over their time in 1910. Use a work-related detail from each scene and one fact from the historical introduction. Do not use the bell, fare, or housing as your main evidence.

ANSWER KEY

The Streetcar Bell

HIGH SCHOOL · RL.11-12.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a detail about the streetcar in each scene. Circle one detail in each scene that shows how life in 1910 affects the character's choices. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the streetcar bell signal a different possibility to Clara and Tomas? Use a detail from each scene.	**For Clara, the bell signals a ride to lessons she could not reach before. For Tomas, it signals a car he watches pass because he cannot spare the fare.**
2	Both scenes mention a nickel fare. How does this shared detail change each character's access to the streetcar?	**Clara puts a nickel in her glove and boards. Tomas needs a nickel each way, but paying for the rides would take money from his family's supper.**
3	Compare one benefit and one cost of the expanding streetcar line across the two scenes. How does each affect a character's choices?	**The line lets Clara travel to night school after work. After the line arrives, Tomas's rent rises and his family moves; he also chooses to walk rather than pay to ride.**
4	Compare the scenes' final images of movement. What different views of change in 1910 do they suggest?	**Clara rides forward smiling at her notebook, suggesting that change opens a path to learning. Tomas follows the moving car on foot, suggesting that its benefits remain out of his reach.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Clara and Tomas both finish a day's work, but their jobs leave them with different choices afterward. Clara sets down her needle and plans to learn something no foreman has assigned. Her unmarked notebook represents time she can direct for herself. Tomas has spent the day unloading crates, yet he must walk toward the docks after his shift. The introduction notes that many workers depended on daily pay, which helps explain why finishing work does not give both characters the same freedom.

Accept comparisons supported by details from both scenes and tied to the shared 1910 setting. For the open task, look for work-related evidence and an accurate connection to the historical introduction.