Knocks Across Time

Notice how a shift in time changes the meaning of a signal.

RL.7.5 "Analyze how the form or structure of a drama, poem or prose text contributes to its meaning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the paragraphs in the order their events happen, then circle each mention of knocking. Use your marks to track how the knocks take on meaning as you read.

The Storage Closet

1. Three knocks sounded from inside the school theater's storage closet. Nia stopped beside the door, clutching the last cardboard moon from the play. The rest of the cast had gone to the lobby when the lights failed, but her little brother, Eli, was not with them. She tried the handle. It would not turn. From somewhere behind her, the custodian called, "Everyone outside!" Nia raised her hand to knock back, then froze. Three knocks came again, slow enough to count.

2. That afternoon, Eli had begged for a part in the show. He was too young to join the cast, so Nia had put him in charge of carrying scenery. Before rehearsal, she had taught him a signal: three knocks meant "I need you," and two meant "I'm coming." They practiced by tapping on opposite sides of a closed costume trunk until he could tell the sounds apart. Eli had laughed at her serious face. "What if I just yell?" he asked. "Then I might not hear you over the music," Nia said.

3. Now Nia struck the closet door twice. A scrape answered her, followed by three more knocks. "Eli's inside!" she shouted. The custodian hurried back with a ring of keys, but even the right key would not open the door. Together they pushed against it until a fallen shelf slid aside. Eli stepped out, dusty and blinking. He had gone in for a missing prop just before the lights failed. Nia looked at the cardboard moon in her hands. She set it down and held his hand all the way to the lobby.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. The story opens with three knocks before explaining the signal. How does that order affect your first reaction to the knocks?

2. How does the shift to that afternoon change your understanding of the knocks in the first paragraph?

3. Why does the story return to the closet after showing Nia and Eli practicing the signal?

4. The cardboard moon appears near the beginning and the end. How does placing it in the final sentences help show what matters to Nia?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence mini-story that begins with a puzzling detail, shifts to an earlier event that explains it, then returns to the first moment for an ending. Add one sentence explaining how your time shift changes what readers understand.

ANSWER KEY

Knocks Across Time

GRADE 7 · RL.7.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the paragraphs in the order their events happen, then circle each mention of knocking. Use your marks to track how the knocks take on meaning as you read. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	The story opens with three knocks before explaining the signal. How does that order affect your first reaction to the knocks?	**The knocks seem mysterious and urgent because the reader does not yet know who is making them or what they mean.**
2	How does the shift to that afternoon change your understanding of the knocks in the first paragraph?	**The earlier scene reveals that three knocks mean "I need you," so the reader can recognize Eli's call for help.**
3	Why does the story return to the closet after showing Nia and Eli practicing the signal?	**The return lets the reader see Nia use the signal she taught Eli: she knocks twice to say she is coming, then helps rescue him.**
4	The cardboard moon appears near the beginning and the end. How does placing it in the final sentences help show what matters to Nia?	**At first Nia carries the prop from the play. At the end she sets it down to hold Eli's hand, showing that he matters more to her than the prop.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Inez grabbed the red ribbon tied to the empty bicycle rack and ran. That morning, her neighbor had tied it there to mark the place where her dog had disappeared. Inez followed muddy paw prints from the rack toward the bakery. Behind the bakery, she found the dog asleep beneath a bench. Starting with the ribbon makes readers wonder why it matters before the earlier event explains its purpose.

For the marking job, the event order is paragraph 2, paragraph 1, paragraph 3. Accept answers that connect a structural choice to its effect on the reader and support that connection with a detail from the text.