When Water Rises

Compare how stories from three imagined eras portray neighbors responding to a flood.

RL.9-10.9 "Analyze two or more texts from different time periods to evaluate the impact of authors' approaches to similar themes or topics."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one act of help in each story and circle each way a warning reaches someone. Number the three endings from 1, most hopeful, to 3, least hopeful, based on how they portray people helping one another.

Three Imagined Flood Stories

(1) 1895, from an imagined story: By dusk, the river had reached the mill steps. Mrs. Vale set her lantern on the bridge and rang the iron dinner bell until its handle bit her palm. Across the water, the baker watched from his dry doorway, counting the sacks he might lose if he opened his cart. Then he saw Mrs. Vale lift a small child above the rising water. He pushed his cart onto the bridge and loaded it with people instead of flour. From every doorway came another lantern, until the street looked less like a town awaiting rescue than a town becoming its own rescue.

(2) 1955, from an imagined story: "Leave the radio," Lena's father said. "We heard the flood warning. Take the dog and go." But Lena held the battery radio high. The announcer named streets that would close before midnight, then went silent under a burst of static. At the corner, Mr. Ortiz stood beside his car, waving drivers toward the low road. "That way is flooding," Lena called. "Who says?" he asked. She held out the radio, but it hissed without a voice. Lena pointed to the dark water creeping over the curb. Mr. Ortiz turned his car around and began waving everyone uphill.

(3) 2025, from an imagined story: My phone flashed: EVACUATE RIVER STREET. The neighborhood chat filled with screenshots, warnings, and three different routes out. I typed, "Which one is safe?" No one answered. Through my window I saw water cover the blue mailbox, then creep toward Mrs. Chen's porch. Her porch light was still on. I ran next door and knocked until she opened it, holding a packed bag and asking why the cars had stopped. I showed her the alert, but the street outside told us more. We walked uphill together, past a line of stalled cars.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Compare how the 1895 and 1955 writers show a warning spreading. How does each approach affect the tension in the story?

2. Both the 1955 and 2025 stories include a tool for sharing warnings. How does each writer show its limits, and what do those limits make the characters do?

3. Compare the 1895 story's view of the town with the 2025 story's first-person view. How does each choice shape the effect of its ending?

4. Each story ends with people moving toward safety. Compare all three endings: What different impression of helping others does each writer leave?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a new three-sentence ending for one story. Then write two sentences comparing how your ending changes the effect of that story's approach to helping others with a different story's ending.

ANSWER KEY

When Water Rises

HIGH SCHOOL · RL.9-10.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one act of help in each story and circle each way a warning reaches someone. Number the three endings from 1, most hopeful, to 3, least hopeful, based on how they portray people helping one another. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare how the 1895 and 1955 writers show a warning spreading. How does each approach affect the tension in the story?	**The 1895 writer uses a bell, a lantern, and a wide view of neighbors joining in, creating a hopeful sense of momentum. The 1955 writer uses dialogue and a radio that falls silent, creating doubt until Lena points to the water.**
2	Both the 1955 and 2025 stories include a tool for sharing warnings. How does each writer show its limits, and what do those limits make the characters do?	**The 1955 radio loses its signal, so Lena shows Mr. Ortiz the rising water. The 2025 chat offers conflicting routes and no answer, so the narrator looks outside and goes to Mrs. Chen.**
3	Compare the 1895 story's view of the town with the 2025 story's first-person view. How does each choice shape the effect of its ending?	**The 1895 writer shows lanterns appearing across town, making the ending feel like a broad community effort. The 2025 narrator follows one neighbor to safety, making the help feel immediate and personal.**
4	Each story ends with people moving toward safety. Compare all three endings: What different impression of helping others does each writer leave?	**The 1895 ending shows many neighbors joining a shared rescue. The 1955 ending shows one person changing course and guiding drivers after accepting a warning. The 2025 ending focuses on two neighbors leaving together despite confusing messages.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mrs. Chen and I reached the hill, where six neighbors stood staring at their phones. I asked them to check the houses below us, and two hurried back with me. When we returned, the others were handing out dry towels to people arriving from the flooded street. This ending shifts the 2025 story from one act of help to a growing community effort. Unlike the 1895 story's wide view of a town joining in, the first-person view lets readers watch that effort begin with one person's choice.

Accept supported interpretations of each ending's effect. For the open task, look for a new three-sentence ending and a two-sentence comparison that identifies how a writer's approach shapes the theme.