When Silence Changes

Trace how a scene's endings shape its meaning.

RL.7.5 "Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza from a text (story, drama, or poem) is formed or structured (e.g., soliloquy, sonnet) to contribute to its meaning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the final sentence of each paragraph and circle its verb. Notice how these sentences mark changes in Maya's scene.

The Jar at the Microphone

1. Maya stood at the library microphone with a folded poem in her hands. The paper made a soft crackle each time her fingers moved. She had read the poem to her grandmother over the phone that morning, but now every face seemed turned toward the tiny sheet. On the page, the first line was easy to see. Saying it was harder. Maya looked at the clock above the door and then at the jar of bean seeds she had brought as a prop. The room waited.

2. From the front row, Eli leaned forward. "Tell them about the jar," he whispered. Maya set the poem beside the microphone and lifted the glass jar instead. A pale root pressed against its side, and one green shoot reached past the rim. "My grandmother and I planted this before she moved away," Maya said. She had planned to read every line without looking up. Instead, she looked at the faces across the room and paused before telling them what happened next. The room waited.

3. "At first I thought nothing was happening," Maya said. "Every day, the jar looked the same." She told them how her grandmother called each night to ask about the seed, even when there was no news. Then one morning, a white root appeared against the glass. Maya held the jar higher so the back row could see it. She did not unfold the poem again. Her last words came slowly: "We were growing something, even when we could not see it." Nobody clapped yet. The room listened.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the first paragraph end with the short sentence “The room waited” after describing Maya at the microphone?

2. How does “The room waited” mean something different at the end of paragraph two than it does at the end of paragraph one?

3. How does placing Eli’s whispered suggestion before Maya sets down her poem help show a turning point?

4. Why does the writer change the final sentence from “The room waited” to “The room listened”?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a new final sentence for paragraph two that makes Maya’s pause feel uneasy instead of curious. Then explain in two or three sentences how placing your sentence there would affect the scene’s ending.

ANSWER KEY # When Silence Changes

GRADE 7 · RL.7.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the final sentence of each paragraph and circle its verb. Notice how these sentences mark changes in Maya's scene. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the first paragraph end with the short sentence "The room waited" after describing Maya at the microphone?	**The short sentence creates a pause and draws attention to Maya's hesitation before she speaks.**
2	How does "The room waited" mean something different at the end of paragraph two than it does at the end of paragraph one?	**In paragraph one, the room waits for Maya to begin. In paragraph two, she has begun speaking, so the room waits to hear what happened next.**
3	How does placing Eli's whispered suggestion before Maya sets down her poem help show a turning point?	**Eli suggests talking about the jar, and Maya immediately sets down the poem and lifts the jar. The order shows her changing how she will share her story.**
4	Why does the writer change the final sentence from "The room waited" to "The room listened"?	**The change shows that Maya is now speaking and the audience is paying attention. The quiet no longer marks a pause before her story.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A chair scraped sharply, and Maya gripped the jar tighter. At the end of paragraph two, that sudden noise makes her pause feel uneasy instead of curious. The quiet attention at the end of paragraph three would then feel like relief after the interruption.

Accept answers that connect a sentence's placement or repeated wording to a change in the scene's meaning. For Your Turn, the new sentence should create unease, and the explanation should address its position at the paragraph's end.