

River Words at Dusk

Use context and connotation to trace mood in a literary scene.

8R4 "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings. Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning, tone, and mood, including words with multiple meanings. (RI&RL)"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline "the river swallowed the last strip of orange sky" and "the bridge held its breath," circle "current," then write 1 beside "last strip of orange sky," 2 beside "pulled leaves past the dock in dark ribbons," and 3 beside "a gull cried" to mark a context clue for each choice in that order.

Recording the Dock

- ① At dusk, Maya stood at the abandoned ferry dock with her notebook pressed to her coat. The river swallowed the last strip of orange sky, and the pilings knocked softly beneath the boards. A sign warned, "KEEP OUT," but its peeled letters looked tired rather than fierce. Maya had come to record the dock's sounds for the school podcast. The empty place made every small noise seem important, even the snap of a loose rope.
- ② She opened her recorder. Across the water, a tugboat moved slowly upriver, its engine a low growl under the wind. Maya noted the current, which pulled leaves past the dock in dark ribbons. Then a gull cried, and the bridge held its breath above her. For one moment, Maya stopped writing. The river did not seem empty anymore. It was watching her as closely as she watched it from the shadowed channel below the dock.
- ③ When Maya played the recording in class the next day, her teacher asked why she had left several seconds of silence at the end. Maya said the silence was not blank. It carried the creak of wet wood, the distant engine, and the feeling that the dock was waiting. Her careful choices turned an ordinary sound report into a tense visit to the river. Listeners could almost feel the cold boards beneath their feet there.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What does “swallowed” mean in paragraph 1? Explain what the river seems to do to the orange sky.

2 What words in paragraph 2 show that “current” means moving water, not something up to date?

3 What does “the bridge held its breath” suggest? How does this phrase affect the mood of the moment?

4 How do the words “tired rather than fierce” change the way the warning sign seems? What tone do they help create?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly three sentences, 40 to 60 words, about a quiet familiar place. Circle one word with multiple meanings, underline one nonliteral phrase, and use the third sentence to explain how your choices create a particular tone or mood.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline “the river swallowed the last strip of orange sky” and “the bridge held its breath,” circle “current,” then write 1 beside “last strip of orange sky,” 2 beside “pulled leaves past the dock in dark ribbons,” and 3 beside “a gull cried” to mark a context clue for each choice in that order. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does “swallowed” mean in paragraph 1? Explain what the river seems to do to the orange sky.	It means the river seems to take in or hide the last orange light of the sky as dusk arrives.
2	What words in paragraph 2 show that “current” means moving water, not something up to date?	The current “pulled leaves past the dock in dark ribbons,” showing that it is moving water.
3	What does “the bridge held its breath” suggest? How does this phrase affect the mood of the moment?	It suggests that the bridge seemed still and silent. The phrase creates a tense, watchful, suspenseful mood.
4	How do the words “tired rather than fierce” change the way the warning sign seems? What tone do they help create?	They make the old sign seem worn out and weak instead of threatening. They help create a neglected, uneasy tone.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At closing time, the library’s (current) of whispers faded, and the lamps painted small gold pools across the scarred tables. Outside, rain tapped the windows while the hallway kept its secrets. These choices make the library feel hushed and mysterious rather than simply empty.

Accept equivalent explanations of the figurative language, context clues, and tone or mood. For Part 3, accept varied settings and word choices when the response has three sentences, 40 to 60 words, a multiple-meaning word, a nonliteral phrase, and a clear mood explanation.