

Words for a Place

Trace how a narrator's choices shape a civic argument.

9-10R6 "Analyze how authors employ point of view, perspective, and purpose to shape explicit and implicit messages (e.g., examine rhetorical strategies, literary elements and devices). (RI&RL)"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline phrases that reveal the narrator's perspective, circle rhetorical strategies, and write P in the margin beside two places that show the narrator's purpose.

The Empty Lot

- ① At the city hearing, I carried a jar of soil from the empty lot on Maple Street. The developers called it vacant, as if nothing had ever breathed there. I remembered my little brother kneeling beside me last spring, his hands black with dirt as he searched for worms. When the council chair asked why the lot mattered, I set the jar on the table. "This is not emptiness," I said. "It is a classroom, a pantry, and the only patch of shade on our block."
- ② I did not pretend that the lot was perfect. Broken glass glittered near the fence, and weeds rose above the tomato beds. Yet those details made my argument stronger, not weaker. If the city could approve luxury apartments within months, it could also send crews to repair a gate and remove trash. I contrasted the speed of construction with the years neighbors had spent building raised beds. My question, "Who benefits when a garden becomes a parking garage?" hung in the quiet room, asking the council to consider more than profit.
- ③ Some council members studied their papers, but Ms. Alvarez looked directly at the jar. After the meeting, she told me that her family had relied on a neighborhood garden when she was young. Her comment did not guarantee a vote, but it showed that stories can change what statistics leave unseen. I wrote about the hearing for our school newspaper because I wanted readers to notice how easily official words can shrink a place. Calling the lot "vacant" made demolition sound practical. Naming its people, labor, and memories made the decision seem human.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How does the narrator's first-person memory of the little brother shape the message about the lot?

2 What is implied by the developers' word "vacant," and how does the narrator challenge that implication?

3 Identify the rhetorical question in paragraph 2. What does it ask the council to consider?

4 How does Ms. Alvarez's response support the narrator's purpose for writing the newspaper article?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write an 80 to 110 word first-person message to a decision maker about protecting or changing a public place. Make your purpose clear, include one rhetorical question or contrast, and use details that reveal your perspective.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline phrases that reveal the narrator's perspective, circle rhetorical strategies, and write P in the margin beside two places that show the narrator's purpose. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the narrator's first-person memory of the little brother shape the message about the lot?	It gives the narrator a personal, neighbor's perspective and presents the lot as a living place with value for families, not empty land.
2	What is implied by the developers' word "vacant," and how does the narrator challenge that implication?	"Vacant" implies that the lot has no value or life. The narrator counters with details about gardening, food, shade, people, labor, and memories.
3	Identify the rhetorical question in paragraph 2. What does it ask the council to consider?	"Who benefits when a garden becomes a parking garage?" It asks the council to consider who gains and loses, rather than focusing only on profit.
4	How does Ms. Alvarez's response support the narrator's purpose for writing the newspaper article?	Her response shows that a personal story can reveal human needs that statistics may miss. It supports the narrator's purpose of showing readers how official language can affect decisions.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Transit Board, please keep the library bus stop open. Each afternoon, I watch students step off with backpacks and walk straight to the library's warm tables. You may see a low ridership number, but I see the only safe ride home for my neighbor, whose mother works late. Closing the stop might save minutes on a route, yet it would cost young people a place to study. What does efficiency mean if it leaves students standing in the rain? Keep the stop, and measure its value in access, not just tickets.

Accept responses that accurately connect first-person perspective, word choice, contrast, or rhetorical questioning to the narrator's purpose. For Part 3, accept varied public places if the response has a clear purpose, a perspective-revealing detail, and an effective rhetorical question or contrast.