

Storm Before Curtain

Track how a narrative moves smoothly through a sudden problem.

9-10W3c "Use a variety of techniques to sequence events to create cohesion and a smooth progression of experiences or events."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words or phrases that move time forward or backward, and number the main events in the order they occur. Circle one place where short details slow down an important moment.

The Backup Plan

- ① Ten minutes before the curtain, rain hammered the roof of Westview High's auditorium. Maya, the student stage manager, stood beside the lighting board while actors whispered behind the closed curtain. Then the building lights blinked once, twice, and went out. For a breath, nobody moved. Maya heard the rain, the audience's surprised murmur, and the sharp click of a dropped prop. Next, she switched on her phone's flashlight and counted the emergency lamps. Only three glowed above the aisles. The show could not begin this way, but Maya knew the cast was waiting for her signal.
- ② Earlier that afternoon, Maya had taped a paper copy of the emergency plan inside the booth. Remembering it now, she sent Luis to find the custodian and asked two actors to hold battery lanterns near the wings. Meanwhile, she climbed the narrow stairs to the sound booth. Each step creaked. At the top, her wet palms slipped on the rail. She reached the backup switch, paused, and pressed it. A low hum answered. One by one, the aisle lamps brightened, followed by the work lights over the stage. Still, the main spotlights remained dark, so Maya changed the plan.
- ③ By the time the custodian arrived, Maya had gathered the cast in a circle. Instead of waiting for the spotlights, she placed lantern holders at both sides of the stage and moved the first scene closer to the audience. After a quick explanation, the actors took their places. Maya raised one hand. The rain continued, but its pounding now sounded like distant applause. When she lowered her hand, Luis started the recorded music from a portable speaker. The play began in warm pools of light. Later, several audience members said the altered opening made the storm seem like part of the story.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What time-order phrase signals a shift to an earlier event in paragraph 2? How does this shift help the reader understand Maya’s actions?

2 In paragraph 1, what event happens after the word “Then”? Why is this placement effective in the sequence?

3 Name two short details from paragraph 2 that slow the action just before Maya uses the backup switch. What effect do they create?

4 Choose two time-order phrases from paragraph 3. For each phrase, state the event it introduces.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write one 90- to 110-word narrative about a plan that changes because of an unexpected problem. Use at least four time-order transitions, including one that shows an earlier event or a later reflection, and slow one key moment with a sentence of five words or fewer.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline words or phrases that move time forward or backward, and number the main events in the order they occur. Circle one place where short details slow down an important moment. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What time-order phrase signals a shift to an earlier event in paragraph 2? How does this shift help the reader understand Maya's actions?	"Earlier that afternoon" shifts back in time. It shows that Maya had prepared an emergency plan, which explains how she knows what to do during the outage.
2	In paragraph 1, what event happens after the word "Then"? Why is this placement effective in the sequence?	The building lights blink and go out. Placing this event after the setting and preparations introduces the problem that changes the planned course of the show.
3	Name two short details from paragraph 2 that slow the action just before Maya uses the backup switch. What effect do they create?	Examples include "Each step creaked," "her wet palms slipped on the rail," and "paused, and pressed it." These details slow the moment and build tension around whether the backup power will work.
4	Choose two time-order phrases from paragraph 3. For each phrase, state the event it introduces.	"After a quick explanation" introduces the actors taking their places. "When she lowered her hand" introduces Luis starting the recorded music. Other correct choices include "By the time the custodian arrived" and "Later."

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At 6:40 that morning, I wheeled my science project toward the gym. Earlier that week, I had tested the model bridge three times, so I expected it to hold. Then a backpack clipped the table, and one support snapped. I could not breathe. I found tape in my supply box and pressed the pieces together. Meanwhile, judges began entering the room. After the tape set, I placed the bridge on its display board. Later, when it held the test weights, I understood why my earlier practice had mattered so much to me.

Accept equivalent explanations that connect time-order language and pacing choices to the narrative's smooth progression. For the open response, check for 90 to 110 words, four or more clear time-order transitions, an earlier event or later reflection, and one sentence of five words or fewer that slows a key moment.