A Border in Words

Trace how perspective shapes a narrator's style.

10.3.R.1 "Students will analyze the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect authors' stylistic choices in grade-level literary and informational texts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one detail about life in East Berlin and one detail about viewers outside Germany, then circle a stylistic choice linked to each detail and give each matching pair the same number.

The Night the Gate Opened

1 For most of my sixteen years in East Berlin, my aunt lived only a few train stops away, across a border I could not cross. At school we practiced dates of national victories; at home we practiced lowering our voices when the radio carried news from the West. My father kept a photograph of his sister inside a cookbook, where visitors would not look. On November 9, 1989, a neighbor knocked and said the crossings might open. Might. That small word felt safer than hope. We put on our coats without discussing what we would do if the guards said no.

2 At Bornholmer Straße, the line moved toward the checkpoint in fits and starts. A guard studied papers; another spoke into a telephone. Papers. Questions. Waiting. These were the ordinary sounds of a city taught to split families with forms. Nobody in the crowd seemed certain that the rules had changed, and I could not make my feet believe it either. Then the barrier rose. The people around me surged forward, yet I noticed a tiny thing: my father's thumb rubbing the corner of the old photograph through his coat pocket, as if a picture could tell him whether his sister was real.

3 Across the crossing, strangers offered directions, coffee, and a welcome that seemed too large for any single street. Somewhere beyond us, television cameras were sending this moment to people who had never seen our checkpoint. To them, the raised barrier might stand for the Cold War loosening its grip. To my father, it meant finding one woman's apartment after twenty-eight years apart. I could not decide which story was bigger. We walked under streetlights that made the wet pavement shine, and every step stretched into a sentence I did not want to end.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the contrast between school lessons and the hidden photograph show the narrator's perspective on life in East Berlin?

2. Why does the narrator use the short fragments "Papers. Questions. Waiting." at the checkpoint?

3. In the final paragraph, why does the narrator place the television viewers' view beside the father's view?

4. Compare the one-word sentence "Might." with the final sentence about each step. How does this change in style reflect the crossing?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write 4 to 5 sentences as a television reporter speaking to viewers outside Germany that night. Use two stylistic choices to connect one family's experience to the event's wider meaning, then explain in your last sentence how your audience shaped those choices.

ANSWER KEY

A Border in Words

GRADE 10 · 10.3.R.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one detail about life in East Berlin and one detail about viewers outside Germany, then circle a stylistic choice linked to each detail and give each matching pair the same number. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the contrast between school lessons and the hidden photograph show the narrator's perspective on life in East Berlin?	**The school lessons present public victories, while the hidden photograph shows a family loss that must be kept private. The contrast reveals that the narrator experiences the border through its effect on family life.**
2	Why does the narrator use the short fragments "Papers. Questions. Waiting." at the checkpoint?	**The fragments make the process feel slow and restrictive, reflecting the family's experience of a border controlled by guards and forms.**
3	In the final paragraph, why does the narrator place the television viewers' view beside the father's view?	**The two views show different scales of meaning: viewers may see a change in the Cold War, while the father sees a chance to reunite with his sister.**
4	Compare the one-word sentence "Might." with the final sentence about each step. How does this change in style reflect the crossing?	**The abrupt sentence conveys uncertainty before the crossing opens. The longer, flowing final sentence reflects the narrator's desire to prolong the moment of new possibility.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Tonight at the Bornholmer Straße crossing in Berlin, a barrier has risen and people are moving through it. One father rubs the corner of a photograph of the sister he has not seen in twenty-eight years. Beyond this family, viewers can see a border of the Cold War beginning to open. A photograph in a coat pocket, a change visible across the world: both belong to this night. I pair a close detail with a broad comparison so viewers outside Germany can understand the event's personal and international meaning.

Accept interpretations that connect a specific choice in wording, sentence length, or contrast to a perspective supported by the passage. For Part 3, look for two identifiable stylistic choices and a final sentence explaining their purpose for an international audience.