The Silent Bell

How literary devices shape a story's danger and hope

10.3.R.4 "Students will evaluate how literary devices impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence: • figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, imagery, symbolism) • sound devices (i.e., onomatopoeia..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two phrases that make the flood feel dangerous, circle the sound that alerts the neighbors, and number the details that show what the bell and railing do. Use your marks to explain how the writer shapes mood and theme.

A Different Warning

1 At dusk, Mara climbed the steps of the town's flood bell tower with river water soaking her shoes. The river had slipped over its banks and was licking the lowest street. Below, kitchen windows glowed; families were setting out plates, unaware that the road by the mill had vanished beneath brown water. Mara pulled the bell rope. The rope scraped her palms, but the iron bell only swung in silence. Its clapper, the metal piece meant to strike its side, had fallen into the weeds. Across the square, someone laughed through an open window. Mara looked back at the rising water.

2 She ran down the steps and grabbed a loose iron bar beside the tower door. She struck the stair railing. Clang! The sound cut through the square like a thrown stone through glass. One face appeared at a window, then three more. Mara struck again and pointed toward the mill road. A baker dropped a tray and ran from door to door, pounding on each one. Soon people were carrying children uphill, and a neighbor opened the school gym for anyone who needed shelter. The bell still rocked overhead, beautiful and useless against the dark sky.

3 From the school steps, Mara watched the river spread across the square. Under the streetlamps, it looked like a dark rope tightening around the houses. No one had expected the stair railing to carry a warning farther than the town bell. Yet each sharp blow had drawn another neighbor outside, and each neighbor had helped someone else. The baker passed out dry blankets from a closet in the gym. When Mara finally set down the iron bar, her hands shook. Above the water, the bell hung silent; below it, the railing still hummed faintly.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the phrase “licking the lowest street” affect the mood? Explain what it suggests about the river.

2. How does “Clang!” change the mood? Use a detail from the passage to explain why this is the first warning sound that reaches the neighbors.

3. What does the metaphor “a dark rope tightening around the houses” suggest about the flood? How does it affect the mood?

4. What is unexpected about the bell and the railing? Explain how this contrast supports a theme of the story.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence alternative ending set just after Mara puts down the iron bar. Include one new figurative or sound device, then use your final sentence to explain how a phrase you wrote shapes the ending’s mood or theme.

ANSWER KEY # The Silent Bell

GRADE 10 · 10.3.R.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two phrases that make the flood feel dangerous, circle the sound that alerts the neighbors, and number the details that show what the bell and railing do. Use your marks to explain how the writer shapes mood and theme. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the phrase "licking the lowest street" affect the mood? Explain what it suggests about the river.	**The personification makes the mood uneasy. It suggests the river is moving into town like a threat reaching for the street.**
2	How does "Clang!" change the mood? Use a detail from the passage to explain why this is the first warning sound that reaches the neighbors.	**The sudden sound makes the mood urgent. The bell had swung in silence, but after the railing makes the clang, faces appear at the windows.**
3	What does the metaphor "a dark rope tightening around the houses" suggest about the flood? How does it affect the mood?	**It suggests that the spreading water is trapping the houses. The image makes the mood tense even after people begin helping one another.**
4	What is unexpected about the bell and the railing? Explain how this contrast supports a theme of the story.	**The town's flood bell fails to ring as intended, while an ordinary railing carries Mara's warning to the neighbors. This situational irony supports the theme that people can find resourceful ways to protect one another.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mara stepped inside the gym as wet shoes squeaked across the floor. The lights above the families glowed like small moons in the storm. She handed a dry blanket to the baker, who had none for himself. The simile "like small moons in the storm" gives the shelter a hopeful mood despite the danger outside.

Accept other supported interpretations of mood and theme. For the ending, check that the student writes four sentences, adds a new device, and explains its effect using a phrase from their own writing.