The Choice Between

Study how a narrator, a flashback, and a repeated sound shape a conflict.

10.3.W.1 "Students will compose narratives reflecting real or imagined experiences that: • include engaging plots involving well-developed, complex characters resolving conflicts • establish narrator(s) that enhance(s) the narrative • are..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the three time stages in the margins, circle each mention of the deck's click, and underline a line of dialogue that reveals the conflict.

The Sound of the Deck

1 The cassette deck clicked, then swallowed my grandmother's voice. In the library basement, rain tapped the high windows while water crept across the tile. My brother Eli held out a dry canvas bag. "Take the tapes upstairs," he said. I kept my palm on the deck. The town's oral history night began in an hour, and the storm had knocked out the upstairs speakers. Eli wanted to carry the tapes to the shelter and play them on a battery player. I wanted them locked in the steel cabinet until the water stopped rising. Neither of us reached for the key.

2 Last winter, I had pressed RECORD instead of PLAY and erased the only interview with Mr. Navarro, who had described the town before the highway. The deck made the same small click. I told the archivist the tape had worn out. Eli knew the truth because he had seen my shaking hands, but he never corrected me. Now he watched the water reach the bottom shelf. "You think a locked cabinet can't get wet?" he asked. His voice was sharp, yet he was wrapping the player in his own jacket. I looked at the key and heard that click again.

3 I told Eli about the lie, though he already knew it. "I need to tell Ms. Chen, too," I said. For a moment he did not move. Then he set the bag beside me, leaving space for the tapes. We slid each cassette into its case and climbed the stairs as water licked the cabinet's legs. At the shelter, Eli steadied the battery player while I explained the missing interview to Ms. Chen. She frowned, then helped us find an empty room. The deck clicked. This time, I let my grandmother's voice fill it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the flashback change your understanding of why the narrator wants to lock up the tapes?

2. Why does the narrator describe the rising water before telling you about last winter?

3. What does the deck's click suggest near the beginning, and how does its effect change at the end?

4. How do Eli's words and actions show two sides of his feelings toward the narrator?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one first-person paragraph of 80 to 105 words about an urgent choice in a different place and conflict from the passage. Begin with the choice, include a brief flashback that explains your hesitation, and end with your decision. Repeat a sound at least twice, and include dialogue, a sensory detail, and sentences of different lengths.

ANSWER KEY

The Choice Between

GRADE 10 · 10.3.W.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the three time stages in the margins, circle each mention of the deck's click, and underline a line of dialogue that reveals the conflict. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the flashback change your understanding of why the narrator wants to lock up the tapes?	**The narrator previously erased an interview by mistake and lied about it. That experience makes handling the tapes again frightening, not merely inconvenient.**
2	Why does the narrator describe the rising water before telling you about last winter?	**The rising water makes the choice urgent. The later flashback then reveals why the narrator hesitates despite the danger.**
3	What does the deck's click suggest near the beginning, and how does its effect change at the end?	**At first, the click is tied to the narrator's fear of losing a recording. At the end, it marks the decision to play a tape and let the voice be heard.**
4	How do Eli's words and actions show two sides of his feelings toward the narrator?	**His sharp question shows frustration with the narrator's plan, but wrapping the player in his jacket and helping pack the tapes show that he still supports them.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The timer buzzed as I lifted a tray of crooked rolls from the oven. Across the bakery, Dad packed boxes for the shelter's breakfast. “Those go too,” he said. Their crusts were rough, and one had split like a cracked stone. Last spring, a customer had photographed my lopsided cake; the comments followed me for weeks. Buzz. I reached for the trash bag, but Dad tore a roll open. Steam warmed my face, and the soft center smelled of rosemary. “Would you eat it?” he asked. I did. Then I put the rolls beside the smooth ones.

Accept other supported interpretations of the click's effect. For the writing task, check that the flashback explains the narrator's hesitation and that the repeated sound helps connect the opening choice to the ending.