When the Bell Rang

Trace how a warning bell shapes mood and theme.

11.3.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 images that shape the mood, circle two sounds you can almost hear, and number the moment when the town's plan fails. Use your marks to explain how the writer's choices affect the story.

The Last Warning

1 On the afternoon the town installed its new flood-warning screen, Mara helped her grandfather clear the square's old bell tower. The council planned to take the bell down on Monday. "No one needs that relic," a council member had said, pointing to the screen's bright map of the river. Grandfather folded the bell rope in his hands but left it hanging. At dusk, rain stitched silver lines across the windows of the bakery. The river, usually a quiet neighbor behind the shops, began pressing against its banks. Mara watched the screen blink green: LOW RISK.

2 By midnight, water had reached the bakery steps. The screen flashed once, then went black when the square lost power. Mara's phone showed no signal. Beyond the shuttered shops, she heard the river slap, slap against a row of doors. Her grandfather was helping a neighbor upstairs; Mara stood alone beneath the tower. The bell rope felt rough and cold, like a strand of wet roots. She pulled. CLANG! The note climbed over the roofs, fell away, then rose again. Lights appeared in upper windows. Someone shouted, "Get to the school on the hill!"

3 By dawn, families had gathered in the school gym, wrapped in borrowed blankets. The water had stopped short of the school, and volunteers counted everyone who had come from the square. Mara studied the red marks the rope had left on her palms. "They were right about one thing," her grandfather said. "That bell is old." Mara remembered the dark screen, then watched hands pass cups of tea along the bleachers. The council had called the bell useless, yet its sound had brought neighbors to their doors. Outside, the rain softened to a whisper.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does describing the river as “a quiet neighbor” change the mood when it begins “pressing against its banks”?

2. Choose “slap, slap” or “CLANG!” Explain how its sound contributes to the mood at that moment.

3. What is ironic about the council's plan for the bell? Use two details from the passage to explain how this irony develops a theme.

4. What might the bell symbolize by the end? Support your interpretation with a detail from the school gym.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- to five-sentence alternative ending from the council member's point of view. Keep the flood and the bell's warning, but create a mood of unease with an original figurative image or sound device. Then add one sentence explaining how your device creates that mood, citing a detail from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

When the Bell Rang

GRADE 11 · 11.3.R.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two images that shape the mood, circle two sounds you can almost hear, and number the moment when the town's plan fails. Use your marks to explain how the writer's choices affect the story. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does describing the river as "a quiet neighbor" change the mood when it begins "pressing against its banks"?	**The personification makes the river seem familiar at first, then threatening as it presses against its banks. The mood shifts toward unease.**
2	Choose "slap, slap" or "CLANG!" Explain how its sound contributes to the mood at that moment.	**"Slap, slap" imitates water striking the doors, creating an urgent, threatening mood. Alternatively, "CLANG!" makes the bell's warning feel sudden and forceful.**
3	What is ironic about the council's plan for the bell? Use two details from the passage to explain how this irony develops a theme.	**The council calls the bell useless and plans to remove it, but the new screen goes dark and the bell alerts the neighbors. The irony suggests that an old tool can still serve a community when a new one fails.**
4	What might the bell symbolize by the end? Support your interpretation with a detail from the school gym.	**The bell can symbolize neighbors looking out for one another. In the gym, people pass cups of tea along the bleachers, continuing the shared care that began with Mara's warning.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In the school gym, I still heard the bell's last note scraping the air. The volunteers counted names, and every pause seemed longer than the one before. Beyond the windows, the river curled around the square like a dark fist. I had voted to remove that bell, and now I could not stop listening for it. When someone opened the gym door, I flinched at water rushing through a gutter. The simile "like a dark fist" makes the river seem threatening, deepening the unease after the passage's warning screen goes dark.

Accept interpretations supported by specific details and a clear link between a device and its effect. For the alternative ending, check that the student preserves the flood and bell warning, writes from the council member's point of view, and explains the effect of an original device.