Who Closes the Doors?

Compare how notices assign action and address readers.

11.5.R.1 "Students will apply their knowledge of syntax (e.g., parallel structure, active and passive voice, and phrases/clauses) to analyze and evaluate a variety of texts, understanding that usage and convention change over time."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the two passive-voice clauses in the earlier notice, then circle the three verbs in its "Patrons shall" list to examine how the notice presents actions.

Two Notices, One Closing Time

1. At a neighborhood library, a volunteer finds a folder of imagined notices from two eras. The earlier notice sounds formal: "The library doors shall be locked at six. Patrons shall return books, keep voices low, and leave the tables clear. Requests for late entry will be reviewed by the director." The notices are fictional, but their wording lets us compare how a public institution might address its readers. On the margin, someone has written that the building once served factory workers who finished their shifts near closing time. The note gives the closing hour a human cost without explaining why the rule existed.

2. A present-day version of the notice takes a different approach: "Staff close the library at six. Return books, speak quietly, and clear the tables. The director reviews requests for late entry." A second line adds, "If your shift ends after six, call the desk before closing." The volunteer hears how the new notice talks directly to readers rather than relying on a distant institutional tone. Yet neither version promises to extend the hours. The added condition offers a possible step for workers, while the fixed closing time still shapes who can visit. Small shifts in sentence structure can make policy sound more personal without changing the policy itself.

3. The volunteer copies both notices for a display about language and access. One visitor prefers the earlier version because its measured rhythm sounds official; another prefers the newer one because it names the staff and offers a direct instruction. Their disagreement suggests that no sentence form carries the same effect for every audience. A passive construction can keep attention on the doors rather than the person closing them, while an active construction can show who acts. In this particular pair of notices, changing conventions do not erase the rule; they change whose role a reader notices first.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Of the two clauses you underlined, which names the actor, and which leaves the actor unnamed? Use words from the notice.

2. Compare the earlier closing sentence with the present-day closing sentence. How does the change in voice shift what readers notice first?

3. How do the three verbs you circled create parallel structure, and how does the present-day list keep or change that pattern?

4. What does the clause “If your shift ends after six” add to the present-day notice, and why might that wording suit some readers better than the earlier notice?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two versions of a notice about a school hallway or community garden: first use passive voice without naming the actor, then use active voice and name the actor. In two more sentences, explain how the change affects a reader's sense of responsibility and which version you would use for a present-day audience.

ANSWER KEY

Who Closes the Doors?

GRADE 11 · 11.5.R.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the two passive-voice clauses in the earlier notice, then circle the three verbs in its "Patrons shall" list to examine how the notice presents actions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Of the two clauses you underlined, which names the actor, and which leaves the actor unnamed? Use words from the notice.	**"Requests for late entry will be reviewed by the director" names the director as the actor. "The library doors shall be locked at six" does not say who locks them.**
2	Compare the earlier closing sentence with the present-day closing sentence. How does the change in voice shift what readers notice first?	**The earlier passive sentence puts the library doors first and leaves the person who locks them unnamed. The present-day active sentence puts "Staff" first, drawing attention to who closes the library.**
3	How do the three verbs you circled create parallel structure, and how does the present-day list keep or change that pattern?	**"Return," "keep," and "leave" share the same verb form after "Patrons shall." The present-day list also uses three matching verb forms, "Return," "speak," and "clear," but addresses readers directly as commands.**
4	What does the clause "If your shift ends after six" add to the present-day notice, and why might that wording suit some readers better than the earlier notice?	**The clause identifies a reader's situation before giving the instruction to call the desk. It may help workers whose shifts end after six see a possible step, while the earlier notice gives no such direction.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The hallway lights will be switched off at 5 p.m. Custodians will switch off the hallway lights at 5 p.m. The active sentence makes the custodians' responsibility clear. I would use it in a present-day notice because readers can tell who handles the lights.

Accept explanations that accurately distinguish an unnamed actor from a named one and connect sentence structure to its effect on readers. For Part 3, the two notices must describe the same action, and the explanation must address both responsibility and audience.