Before the Digging

Trace how setting, conflict, and point of view shape a character's choice.

7.3.R.3 "Students will analyze literary elements to support an interpretation of a text: • setting • plot • characters (i.e., protagonist, antagonist) • characterization • conflict (i.e., internal, external) • point of view (i.e...."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details about the garden or work site, circle one clue to Nia's feelings, and number Nia's arrival, her request, and the tin's return in order.

The Seeds

1 At six thirty, the community garden lay under a cold gray sky. Orange flags marked the path of a new sidewalk, straight through the bean beds. Nia stopped at the gate, her fingers stiff inside her coat pockets. Her grandmother had tucked dried bean seeds into a tin beneath the old scarecrow, and Nia wanted them before the crew arrived. She had promised to save them, but the fence around the work site made her feel as if she were doing something wrong.

2 A truck rattled up to the curb. Mr. Vale, the crew leader, stepped out and pointed to a sign: WORK AREA. KEEP OUT. DIGGING BEGINS AT 7:00. "You can't go in," he said. Nia gripped the gate. She could leave, but then the beans her grandmother had grown for years might disappear beneath the gravel. "There's a tin under that scarecrow," she said, surprised that her voice held steady. "Could you get it for me?" Mr. Vale studied the flags, then looked at his watch.

3 The crew was not due to start digging until seven. Mr. Vale opened the gate and walked to the scarecrow while Nia waited by the curb. He lifted the tin from the soil and handed it over without a word. Inside, the seeds clicked softly when Nia shook it. She had expected a fight; instead, she had asked for help. As the truck's engine started, she tucked the tin into her pocket and pictured a row of beans climbing a fence somewhere else.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the setting make Nia's goal urgent? Use two details from the passage.

2. What do Nia's thoughts and her request to Mr. Vale reveal about her character?

3. Identify one conflict outside Nia and one conflict inside her. What passage detail shows each?

4. The narrator tells you Nia's thoughts but not Mr. Vale's. How does this point of view affect your view of him before he opens the gate?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Rewrite the gate encounter in 4 to 5 sentences from Mr. Vale's third-person limited point of view. Include one thought only he knows and show Nia through something he can see or hear, while keeping the events the same.

ANSWER KEY

Before the Digging

GRADE 7 · 7.3.R.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details about the garden or work site, circle one clue to Nia's feelings, and number Nia's arrival, her request, and the tin's return in order. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the setting make Nia's goal urgent? Use two details from the passage.	**The sidewalk will cut through the bean beds, and the sign says digging begins at seven, giving Nia little time to save the seeds.**
2	What do Nia's thoughts and her request to Mr. Vale reveal about her character?	**Nia feels uneasy about being at the gate, but she keeps her promise and asks for help despite expecting a fight.**
3	Identify one conflict outside Nia and one conflict inside her. What passage detail shows each?	**Outside Nia, the fence and Mr. Vale's rule keep her from the tin. Inside, she wants to save the seeds but feels as if entering the work site would be wrong.**
4	The narrator tells you Nia's thoughts but not Mr. Vale's. How does this point of view affect your view of him before he opens the gate?	**Because readers know Nia expects a fight but cannot know Mr. Vale's intentions, his warning and silence make him seem like an obstacle who might refuse her request.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Mr. Vale spotted a girl gripping the gate and pointed to the work sign. He had time before digging began, but he did not want anyone walking among the marked beds. When she asked about a tin beneath the scarecrow, her steady voice made him pause. He opened the gate himself, found the tin, and placed it in her hands without a word. As the truck started, he hoped the seeds inside would grow somewhere safe.

Accept different supported interpretations of Nia and Mr. Vale. For the rewrite, check that the narrator reveals Mr. Vale's thoughts without claiming to know Nia's thoughts, and that the events remain consistent with the passage.