Across the Bridge

How story details shape mood and theme

7.3.R.5 "Students will identify literary elements and devices that impact a text's theme and mood."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that make the bridge feel frightening, circle two details that make it feel less frightening, and number the two times Mara says the same words to track how the mood and theme develop.

One Step

1 The storm had swallowed the last bus when Mara reached the footbridge. Below it, the creek rushed over the rocks like a crowd arguing in the dark. The bridge boards knocked under her shoes, and the streetlamp at the far end flickered twice before going out. At home, her little brother was waiting for the library book she carried in her backpack. Mara gripped the railing. "One step," she whispered, but her feet stayed still. Behind her, a bicycle bell rang sharply in the rain.

2 A bicycle rolled up beside her, its headlight cutting a pale circle through the rain. Mr. Vale climbed off, holding the handlebars with one hand and a paper bag with the other. Mara had passed him a hundred times without saying hello. "The boards sound worse than they are," he said. He set one foot on the bridge, then stopped. "Would you like me to walk with you?" Mara looked at the black stretch ahead. The creek kept arguing below, but the little circle of light stayed steady.

3 Mara nodded. They crossed slowly, matching their steps to the soft click of the bicycle wheels. Halfway over, a gust shook the railing, and Mara froze again. Mr. Vale waited without pulling her forward. "One step," she said, this time loud enough for him to hear. Soon the bridge was behind them. At her door, Mara saw that his paper bag held bread rolls, warm beneath the damp paper. He offered her one for her brother. The creek still roared, but Mara heard something else now: their footsteps continuing down the street.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does comparing the creek to "a crowd arguing in the dark" affect the mood at the start?

2. What changes about the mood when Mr. Vale's headlight appears and its circle of light stays steady? Explain how the light creates that change.

3. Mara says "One step" twice. What changes between the two times, and how does that change develop a theme?

4. At the end, Mara hears both the roaring creek and their footsteps. How does this contrast affect the mood and support a theme?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence scene about someone facing a challenge different from Mara's. Use a repeated phrase and at least one sensory detail to shift the mood, then add one sentence explaining how your choices suggest a theme.

ANSWER KEY

Across the Bridge

GRADE 7 · 7.3.R.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that make the bridge feel frightening, circle two details that make it feel less frightening, and number the two times Mara says the same words to track how the mood and theme develop. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does comparing the creek to "a crowd arguing in the dark" affect the mood at the start?	**The comparison makes the creek sound loud and threatening, creating an uneasy mood.**
2	What changes about the mood when Mr. Vale's headlight appears and its circle of light stays steady? Explain how the light creates that change.	**The mood becomes less frightening because the steady light makes the dark bridge seem easier to cross.**
3	Mara says "One step" twice. What changes between the two times, and how does that change develop a theme?	**At first she whispers and cannot move. Later she speaks loudly and keeps going with Mr. Vale. The change suggests that accepting help can make it easier to act despite fear.**
4	At the end, Mara hears both the roaring creek and their footsteps. How does this contrast affect the mood and support a theme?	**The creek remains loud, but Mara notices their footsteps as they move forward together. The mood becomes hopeful, suggesting that support can help someone face a fear even when it has not disappeared.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The pottery wheel hummed while Nia watched her lopsided bowl collapse. "Try again," she muttered, wiping cold clay from her fingers. On her next turn, the bowl leaned, but she steadied it and said, "Try again." By the end of class, a small bowl stood firm beneath her hands. The repeated words and the shift from a collapsing bowl to a steady one suggest that patience helps people improve.

Accept other supported interpretations of the mood and theme. For Part 3, look for four scene sentences, one explanation sentence, a repeated phrase, a sensory detail, and a clear link between those choices and the theme.