Across the Aisle

How actions and point of view shape a character's interpretation

8.3.R.3 "Students will analyze literary elements to support interpretations of a literary 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 places that reveal Mina's thoughts or guesses, and circle two of Leo's actions. Compare what Mina thinks with what Leo does.

The Leaking River

1 By the time the science fair doors opened, the gym lights were already humming over rows of crowded tables. Mina stood behind her model river, watching a thin line of water drip from a cracked plastic tube onto the cardboard town. She had tested the pump twice that morning. Now the judges were moving down the aisle, and the cardboard houses were beginning to sag. Across the aisle, Leo glanced at her display, then bent over his own. Mina was sure he had noticed the leak, and she wished he would stop looking.

2 Mina pinched the tube shut, but water slipped between her fingers. Leo looked straight at her while she tugged at the damp cuff of her sleeve, then crossed the aisle. “Your pump is still running,” he said. His voice sounded sharp to Mina, as if he were pointing out her mistake for everyone to hear. She reached for the switch on the back of the display, but a judge stepped into the narrow space beside her. Leo walked around the other side and stopped the pump.

3 For a moment, Mina could hear only water tapping into the tray below. Leo pulled a roll of clear tape from his pocket and held it out. “I brought this for my own display,” he said. “Maybe it will hold until you finish.” Mina took the tape, and together they wrapped the cracked tube. She had thought his quick walk meant criticism. Now she wondered if he had only wanted to help. When the judge returned, the houses were still damp, yet the town was standing.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the science fair setting make the leak more urgent for Mina?

2. What external problem does Mina face, and what internal conflict does she face? Give a detail for each.

3. How do two of Leo's actions challenge Mina's first interpretation of him?

4. What detail shows that the narrator follows Mina's thoughts rather than Leo's? What can you not know for certain about Leo?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Retell Leo's visit to Mina's table in four sentences from Leo's third-person-limited point of view. Include what he thinks when he sees Mina tug her sleeve and what he does at the table, but do not claim he knows Mina's thoughts.

ANSWER KEY

Across the Aisle

GRADE 8 · 8.3.R.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two places that reveal Mina's thoughts or guesses, and circle two of Leo's actions. Compare what Mina thinks with what Leo does. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the science fair setting make the leak more urgent for Mina?	**The judges are moving down the aisle toward Mina's display while water is damaging its cardboard houses.**
2	What external problem does Mina face, and what internal conflict does she face? Give a detail for each.	**The cracked tube leaks onto the cardboard town, making the houses sag. Mina also worries that Leo is noticing her mistake and coming to criticize her.**
3	How do two of Leo's actions challenge Mina's first interpretation of him?	**Leo stops the pump and offers tape to repair the tube. These helpful actions challenge Mina's belief that he came over to criticize her.**
4	What detail shows that the narrator follows Mina's thoughts rather than Leo's? What can you not know for certain about Leo?	**The narrator reports that Mina thinks Leo's voice sounds sharp. The passage does not reveal Leo's thoughts or whether he intended to criticize her.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Leo saw Mina tug at her damp sleeve and guessed she was worried about the leak. He hurried across the aisle, hoping to stop the pump before more water reached the cardboard houses. When he saw the judge blocking the narrow space, he went around the table and switched off the pump. He offered Mina his roll of tape, unsure whether she would accept it.

Accept supported interpretations of Mina's worries and Leo's actions. For the retelling, look for four sentences limited to Leo's observations and thoughts, without access to Mina's private thoughts.