When Silence Speaks

Read a model narrative, then write a scene with a flashback.

8.3.W.1 "Students will compose narratives reflecting real or imagined experiences that: • include plots involving complex characters resolving conflicts • unfold in chronological or surprising sequence (e.g...."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the paragraphs 2, 1, and 3 to show when their main events happen. Circle two sensory details and underline the sentence where the narrator admits the mistake.

Three Seconds of Static

1 At five minutes to opening, the library speaker hissed instead of playing our neighborhood interviews. Mara pressed the tablet screen again. Nothing but static. Across the room, visitors shook rain from their coats, and the air smelled of wet wool and fresh paint. "You checked the file, right?" Mr. Vale asked Mara. She nodded, but her fingers tightened around the tablet. I stood beside the exhibit, staring at its bright blue title card. Everyone thought Mara had erased the recording. I knew why the voices were gone.

2 That morning, Mara had handed me the tablet while she carried display boards upstairs. "Just trim the silence at the start," she said. I wanted the first voice to sound perfect, so I tapped through menus I barely understood. When I saved my edit, the file shrank to three seconds of crackling air. I could have told Mara then. Instead, I renamed it "Final," slipped the tablet into its case, and promised myself I would fix it later. Now her face burned under Mr. Vale's worried stare.

3 The speaker gave another dry click. I stepped toward Mr. Vale before I could change my mind. "Mara didn't erase it. I ruined the edit," I said. Mara stared at me, then pulled out her phone. "The original is still here," she said, her voice sharp. We connected her phone to the speaker, and an older neighbor's laugh filled the room. Mr. Vale welcomed the visitors while Mara avoided my eyes. After the crowd moved on, I asked if I could help label the next interview. She handed me a pen, not a smile.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the narrator move back to that morning in the second paragraph? What does this change about your understanding of the first paragraph?

2. What does the narrator want, and what makes it hard to act? Use one detail from the passage.

3. How does the short sentence “Nothing but static.” affect the opening scene?

4. What does Mara’s final action show about the conflict? What remains unsettled?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph of 80 to 110 words about a narrator who hides a mistake, then admits it. Begin near the moment the mistake matters, include a brief flashback, dialogue, a sensory detail, and sentences of different lengths. End with a small action that shows how another character feels after the problem is solved.

ANSWER KEY

When Silence Speaks

GRADE 8 · 8.3.W.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the paragraphs 2, 1, and 3 to show when their main events happen. Circle two sensory details and underline the sentence where the narrator admits the mistake. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the narrator move back to that morning in the second paragraph? What does this change about your understanding of the first paragraph?	**The flashback shows that the narrator damaged the file and hid the mistake. It reveals that Mara is being blamed for something the narrator did.**
2	What does the narrator want, and what makes it hard to act? Use one detail from the passage.	**The narrator wants to fix the recording without admitting the mistake. Fear of being blamed makes confession hard, so the narrator renames the damaged file "Final" instead of telling Mara.**
3	How does the short sentence "Nothing but static." affect the opening scene?	**It abruptly confirms that the recording will not play, making the problem feel immediate and tense.**
4	What does Mara's final action show about the conflict? What remains unsettled?	**Handing the narrator a pen shows that Mara accepts some help. Giving no smile suggests that her trust has not been fully repaired.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The robotics club's demonstration began in ten minutes, and our model bridge would not lift. Dust tickled my nose. Nia twisted the switch again. Click. Yesterday, I had borrowed the motor for my own project and put it back without tightening the wire. I had seen it wobble, but I had said nothing. "I left the wire loose," I told her. "Can we fix it?" Nia handed me a screwdriver without looking up. We tightened the wire together, and the bridge rose when the judges arrived. She let me carry the toolbox, but she kept the demonstration notes.

Accept answers that connect a specific craft choice to its effect, even if students use different wording. The sample for Part 3 is 98 words and meets the one-paragraph limit.