Beyond the Words

Use questions to test what speakers mean.

9.1.L.2 "Students will actively listen in order to analyze and evaluate speakers' verbal and nonverbal messages by asking questions to clarify purpose and perspective."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two spoken claims, circle two nonverbal cues, and number two places where a clarifying question would help you judge a speaker's purpose or perspective.

The Thursday Proposal

1. At a student council meeting, Maya proposes keeping the school library open for an extra hour on Thursdays. "Students with late buses need a quiet place to finish work," she says. She speaks quickly and taps a folded bus schedule on the table. "Last week, twelve students waited outside after the library closed." The number catches the room's attention, but Maya does not say whether she counted them on one day or across several days. When she calls the plan "easy," she glances toward Mr. Chen, the librarian, who is stacking returned books beside his chair.

2. Mr. Chen folds his arms, then leans forward. "A later closing time could help students," he says, "but I lock up alone on Thursdays." His voice stays even, and he points to a list of tasks: shelving books, shutting down computers, and checking the doors. Maya pauses and asks, "Would you need to stay for that whole extra hour, or could someone else supervise part of it?" Mr. Chen replies that an adult must supervise students and that he has not been offered another staff member. He adds that he would consider the plan if supervision were arranged.

3. Jordan, who rides a late bus, raises a hand. "I want somewhere warm to wait," Jordan says, while rubbing their hands together. "But I also need to know whether the library would actually be open when my bus leaves at five." Maya looks at the bus schedule again. She admits that the bus times vary by route and that she has checked only her own route. Jordan asks which routes have students waiting after the current closing time. Maya promises to check the schedules before asking the council to vote. The group ends without deciding whether to extend the hours.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What would you ask Maya to clarify whether her count supports the proposal? Which part of her statement makes your question necessary?

2. How does Mr. Chen's reply to Maya's question clarify his perspective? Why would his folded arms alone be weak evidence that he opposes the plan?

3. Why does Jordan ask about bus routes? How do Jordan's words and hand movement help you understand that question?

4. Maya calls the plan “easy” but looks at Mr. Chen. What would you ask to clarify whose work she has considered? Which later detail shows why that question matters?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a brief exchange at a school meeting about a different proposal. In four to five sentences, include a speaker's claim and a nonverbal cue, ask a question that clarifies the speaker's perspective, and explain how two possible answers would change your evaluation.

ANSWER KEY

Beyond the Words

GRADE 9 · 9.1.L.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two spoken claims, circle two nonverbal cues, and number two places where a clarifying question would help you judge a speaker's purpose or perspective. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What would you ask Maya to clarify whether her count supports the proposal? Which part of her statement makes your question necessary?	**Ask whether the twelve students waited on one day or across several days. Maya says "last week" but does not explain how she counted them.**
2	How does Mr. Chen's reply to Maya's question clarify his perspective? Why would his folded arms alone be weak evidence that he opposes the plan?	**He would consider the plan if another adult could supervise, but none has been offered. Folded arms alone do not show whether he opposes the plan.**
3	Why does Jordan ask about bus routes? How do Jordan's words and hand movement help you understand that question?	**Jordan wants to know whether the proposed hours would help students on different routes. Jordan says they want a warm place and rubs their hands, suggesting the wait outside is uncomfortable.**
4	Maya calls the plan "easy" but looks at Mr. Chen. What would you ask to clarify whose work she has considered? Which later detail shows why that question matters?	**Ask whether Maya has accounted for Mr. Chen's supervision and closing tasks. He locks up alone on Thursdays and has not been offered another staff member.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a meeting about replacing the courtyard benches, a student says, "Everyone wants more standing tables," while gripping a petition behind her back. I would ask, "Whose views does your petition include, and what choices did they have?" If she surveyed the whole school with several options, I would take her claim more seriously. If she asked only her friends whether they liked standing tables, I would doubt that "everyone" agrees. Her grip might signal nerves rather than dishonesty, so I would not judge her claim from that cue alone.

Accept other precise clarifying questions grounded in the exchange. Students should use nonverbal cues as clues, not proof of a speaker's beliefs or intentions.