The Lemon Tree

How historical perspective shapes a narrator's style

9.3.R.1 "Students will analyze the extent to which historical, cultural, and/or global perspectives affect authors' stylistic choices in grade-level literary and informational texts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read the passage. Underline two examples of official language, circle two images of home, and number each appearance of the tree or its branch to track how the narrator tells this history.

What the Notice Could Not List

1 In April 1942, the notice went up beside the grocery store. Families of Japanese ancestry on our street had days to report for removal from the West Coast. The notice used the word *relocation*, as if we were choosing a new address. My mother read it once, then folded our laundry into a suitcase so full the latch would not close. I kept thinking about our lemon tree. It was not large enough to give much shade, but every spring it made the yard smell sharp and clean. A notice could list what to carry. It could not list what we were leaving.

2 At the assembly center, we slept in a space divided from other families by thin walls. Each morning, footsteps and voices arrived before daylight, no matter how quietly anyone tried to move. My younger brother asked when we were going home. I said, "Soon," though the word felt as flimsy as the walls. On a scrap of paper, I drew the lemon tree with its crooked branch. I drew it again the next day, and the next. In my drawings, the branch stayed where it belonged. Outside them, every rule about where we belonged seemed to change.

3 Years later, I found that scrap tucked inside a book. The pencil had faded, but I could still see the branch bending toward our kitchen window. When I tell this story, I could begin with the number on our family tag or the dates on an order. Those facts matter. Yet I begin with the tree because the government wrote about people as groups to be moved, while we knew ourselves through particular places and people. The word *relocation* still sounds neat on paper. In my memory, leaving was anything but neat.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the narrator question the word *relocation*? Explain how its tone differs from the family's experience.

2. In the first paragraph, what is the effect of placing short sentences about the notice beside details about the suitcase and yard?

3. How does the repeated image of the tree express the narrator's perspective on being removed from home?

4. To what extent does the history of forced removal shape the passage's style? Use two different choices the narrator makes as evidence.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a neighbor who stayed on the street tells part of this story. Write two sentences in the neighbor's voice, then write two sentences explaining how two choices in your writing show a perspective different from the narrator's.

ANSWER KEY

The Lemon Tree

GRADE 9 · 9.3.R.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Read the passage. Underline two examples of official language, circle two images of home, and number each appearance of the tree or its branch to track how the narrator tells this history. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the narrator question the word *relocation*? Explain how its tone differs from the family's experience.	**The word sounds orderly and voluntary, but the family is required to leave its home. The contrast shows how official language hides the experience of forced removal.**
2	In the first paragraph, what is the effect of placing short sentences about the notice beside details about the suitcase and yard?	**The short sentences make the notice sound limited and impersonal. The concrete details show what the family loses, which the notice cannot describe.**
3	How does the repeated image of the tree express the narrator's perspective on being removed from home?	**The tree represents a particular home and a sense of belonging. Drawing and remembering it let the narrator hold on to that place after being forced to leave.**
4	To what extent does the history of forced removal shape the passage's style? Use two different choices the narrator makes as evidence.	**It shapes the style throughout: the narrator contrasts official terms with personal details and repeats the tree image. Both choices challenge the government's impersonal account of removal.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I watched the family carry suitcases away, and I watched their windows go dark. The next spring, blossoms covered the lemon tree, but I did not know if the family would return. Repeating "I watched" shows that the neighbor witnessed the departure but did not experience removal as the narrator did. The contrast between blossoms and dark windows shows how the neighbor sees the family's absence in a place that once held their daily life.

Accept interpretations supported by specific language in the passage. For the open task, look for a neighbor's limited perspective and explanations of two distinct stylistic choices.