The Missing Click

Trace how story details shape mood and theme.

9.3.R.3 "Students will evaluate how literary elements impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence: • setting • plot structure (e.g., foreshadowing, flashback, in media res) • conflict (i.e., internal, external) • characters (e.g...."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two setting details that change the mood, circle two clues about the door latch, and number two statements by Mara that do not quite agree. Use your marks to consider how the story's details shape its meaning.

The Greenhouse Door

1 At nine, the community greenhouse glowed like a lantern against the dark. Outside, freezing rain tapped the panes; inside, the tomato seedlings stood in neat green rows. Nina checked the door latch twice before we left. "It sticks when the wind turns," she said, and pressed it until it clicked. I laughed and said we had an early bus to catch. When she went ahead, I slipped back for my forgotten gloves. I remember pulling the door toward me, but I do not remember hearing the click. By morning, a white crust covered the inside of the glass.

2 Nina was already there, wrapping the smallest pots in her scarf. Cold air streamed through a narrow gap at the door. "The storm pushed it open," I said, before she asked. It sounded reasonable, especially to me. Nina said nothing. She found a roll of tape, sealed the gap, and started moving trays toward the heater. I helped, careful not to look at the latch. Each time Nina brushed past me with another tray, I imagined her asking what I had done after she left. She never did, and her silence made the room feel colder.

3 At last, Nina held up a tray of drooping seedlings. "Some might live if we move fast," she said. I wanted to keep my place beside the heater and let the storm take the blame. Instead, I told her about the gloves and the missing click. She set the tray down and examined the latch. Its metal tongue had caught on the frame, but it had not slipped into place. "Next time, we check together," she said. We carried the trays to the warmest shelf. Outside, the rain kept striking the glass, but I could finally hear our footsteps over it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the greenhouse setting change the mood from the first paragraph to the second? Use one detail from each paragraph.

2. How does Nina's warning about the latch affect the moment Mara finds the greenhouse cold? Use a detail from each moment.

3. Why might a reader doubt Mara's first explanation for the open door? Explain how her point of view affects the tone of that moment.

4. What do Nina's actions and her final words reveal about her character? How do they help develop a theme of the story?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write 4 to 5 sentences that give Mara a different choice at the end. Use one specific detail from the passage and explain how your new ending changes the story's theme.

ANSWER KEY

The Missing Click

GRADE 9 · 9.3.R.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two setting details that change the mood, circle two clues about the door latch, and number two statements by Mara that do not quite agree. Use your marks to consider how the story's details shape its meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the greenhouse setting change the mood from the first paragraph to the second? Use one detail from each paragraph.	**The greenhouse first feels warm and safe, with seedlings in neat rows. The white crust and cold air through the door make it feel threatened and tense.**
2	How does Nina's warning about the latch affect the moment Mara finds the greenhouse cold? Use a detail from each moment.	**Nina warns that the latch sticks, so the later gap at the door feels like a danger the reader saw coming. Mara's memory of not hearing a click adds suspense about her role in it.**
3	Why might a reader doubt Mara's first explanation for the open door? Explain how her point of view affects the tone of that moment.	**Mara blames the storm even though she remembers returning for her gloves and not hearing the latch click. Because she tells the story while hiding that memory from Nina, her explanation sounds defensive.**
4	What do Nina's actions and her final words reveal about her character? How do they help develop a theme of the story?	**Nina uses her scarf to protect seedlings, moves trays, and says they will check the latch together. Her practical, forgiving response supports a theme that admitting a mistake allows people to work together to repair harm.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I decide not to tell Nina that I returned for my gloves. As she wraps the smallest pots in her scarf, I carry trays toward the heater and blame the storm again. Nina thanks me, but I cannot meet her eyes. Even when the seedlings recover, I still think about the latch. This ending suggests that hiding a mistake can make guilt last longer than the damage itself.

Accept interpretations supported by specific passage details. For the open task, the changed choice should lead to a theme that differs from, or meaningfully complicates, the original ending.