Lights Out, Voices On

Read how language shapes a performance and its meaning.

9.3.R.4 "Students will evaluate how literary devices impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence: • figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, imagery, symbolism) • sound devices (i.e., onomatopoeia…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two examples of figurative language, circle one sound word, and number two details that show how the mood changes. Use your marks as evidence when you answer the questions.

The Last Performance

1 The drama club had one night to perform before the school auditorium closed for repairs. Mara had spent a week arranging colored lights to make their plain set look like a palace. As the audience settled in, the empty seats near the back looked like rows of shut eyes. Mara tugged a cable behind the curtain. Click. The stage lights flashed once, then darkness covered the room. A low murmur rolled through the crowd. Mara gripped her script so tightly that its pages crackled. Without the lights, she thought, everyone would see how little they had built.

2 Then Jonah, who played the king, raised a small flashlight beneath his chin. His face glowed strangely, and someone in the front row laughed. Mara expected the laughter to spread like a stain, but Jonah began his first line anyway. His voice filled the room, steady as a drumbeat. One by one, the other actors stepped forward and spoke from memory. The curtains seemed to hold their breath. From the aisle, a teacher aimed a phone light at the cardboard throne. Soon other tiny beams joined it, not bright enough to hide the set, but enough to show every face.

3 At the final scene, the actors stood together under a scatter of borrowed light. The throne leaned sideways, and the painted palace wall showed its tape, yet nobody looked away. When Jonah declared that a kingdom was only as strong as its people, a voice from the back whispered, "Hear that?" The last word fell into a hush. Then applause burst out, sharp and sudden as rain on a roof. Mara looked at the dead lights above the stage. She had planned to conceal every rough edge. Instead, their failure had let the audience see the hands holding the whole play together.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the comparison of the empty seats to "rows of shut eyes" shape the mood before the lights fail?

2. What effect does the single word "Click" have at the moment the lights fail? Use another detail from that moment to support your answer.

3. The curtains seem to "hold their breath." How does this description affect the mood as the actors continue?

4. Why is the result of the lighting failure ironic? Explain how that irony develops the story's message.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a new ending of three sentences in which the audience reacts differently. Include a new simile or sound device, then write two sentences explaining how your device changes the mood and how your ending changes the story's message, citing one phrase from the original ending.

ANSWER KEY

Lights Out, Voices On

GRADE 9 · 9.3.R.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two examples of figurative language, circle one sound word, and number two details that show how the mood changes. Use your marks as evidence when you answer the questions. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the comparison of the empty seats to "rows of shut eyes" shape the mood before the lights fail?	**The simile makes the auditorium feel watchful but unresponsive, adding unease before the performance begins.**
2	What effect does the single word "Click" have at the moment the lights fail? Use another detail from that moment to support your answer.	**"Click" makes the failure feel sudden and sharp. The lights flash once before darkness covers the room, increasing the tension.**
3	The curtains seem to "hold their breath." How does this description affect the mood as the actors continue?	**The personification creates suspense, as if even the room is waiting to see whether the actors can continue.**
4	Why is the result of the lighting failure ironic? Explain how that irony develops the story's message.	**Mara wanted the lights to hide the set's flaws, but losing them lets the audience see the people working together. The irony suggests that their shared effort matters more than a polished appearance.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The audience sat still while the last light trembled against the wall. A cough popped like a firecracker, and Mara lowered her eyes. Then Jonah took her hand as the room emptied. The simile makes the silence feel startling and uncomfortable rather than triumphant. Instead of "applause burst out," this ending suggests that the actors' support matters even without the crowd's approval.

Accept interpretations grounded in the quoted language and its effect on mood or message. For the new ending, check for exactly three story sentences, a new simile or sound device, and two explanation sentences that cite the original ending.