The Hidden Story

Use a colon to turn a clue into a reveal.

9.5.W.8 "Students will use a colon to reveal information (e.g., The prince searched the castle high and low for his most prized possession: his guitar.)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the complete thought before each colon and circle the information it reveals so you can see how the colon sets up a detail.

The Key with Blue Thread

1. For our library's display of ordinary mysteries, each student chose an object with a hidden story. I brought the strangest thing from my uncle's desk: a brass key with blue thread tied to its ring. Nobody could tell me what it opened, and my uncle had moved away before I thought to ask. At first, I pictured a locked trunk filled with maps or coins. Then I noticed a fleck of gray paint on the key. That tiny mark gave me a better place to look: the shed behind his old house.

2. The shed door was painted gray, but its lock was much too large for my key. I searched the shelves while rain tapped against the roof. Behind a row of flowerpots, I found what I had missed: a narrow metal box with a tiny keyhole. The key turned easily. Inside the box lay a neat stack of ticket stubs from the town's old movie theater. One stub held a message in my uncle's handwriting: 'Save a seat for Mara.' The dates on the tickets stretched across ten summers, and each ticket was for a Friday evening.

3. I took the box to my uncle when he visited that weekend. He studied the tickets, then explained that Mara had been his closest friend in high school. Their families later moved to different towns, but the friends met at the theater each summer. My uncle had saved the stubs for one simple reason: he wanted to remember those visits. Back at the library, I placed the key beside the tickets and wrote a card for the display. The card offered visitors a different kind of treasure: proof that a small object can hold a long friendship.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what does the colon after 'a better place to look' reveal? How do the words before it prepare you for that detail?

2. In paragraph 2, copy the complete thought before the colon that introduces the metal box. What detail does the colon reveal?

3. In paragraph 2, how does the colon after 'my uncle's handwriting' make the message more specific?

4. In paragraph 3, what information follows each colon? Explain what each reveal adds to the story.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose an ordinary object other than a key or ticket. Write three or four sentences about a hidden story it holds, including two sentences that use a colon after a complete thought to reveal specific information.

ANSWER KEY

The Hidden Story

GRADE 9 · 9.5.W.8

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the complete thought before each colon and circle the information it reveals so you can see how the colon sets up a detail. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does the colon after 'a better place to look' reveal? How do the words before it prepare you for that detail?	**It reveals the shed behind his old house. The words before the colon promise a place but do not name it.**
2	In paragraph 2, copy the complete thought before the colon that introduces the metal box. What detail does the colon reveal?	**The complete thought is 'Behind a row of flowerpots, I found what I had missed.' The colon reveals a narrow metal box with a tiny keyhole.**
3	In paragraph 2, how does the colon after 'my uncle's handwriting' make the message more specific?	**It gives the message's exact words: 'Save a seat for Mara.'**
4	In paragraph 3, what information follows each colon? Explain what each reveal adds to the story.	**The first reveals that the uncle saved the stubs to remember his visits with Mara. The second reveals that the display's treasure is proof that a small object can hold a long friendship.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I found an odd object in the kitchen drawer: a wooden spoon with a date carved into its handle. My mother told me why she kept it: my grandmother used it to make soup every Sunday. I set the spoon on the table and imagined the meals they had shared.

Accept equivalent explanations of what each colon reveals. For Part 3, check that both colons follow complete thoughts and introduce specific information about the student's chosen object.