Who Took Action?

Read what the grammar reveals, and what it leaves unsaid.

12.LL.19 "Interpret how an author's grammar and rhetorical style contribute to the meaning in both fiction, including poetry and prose, and nonfiction, including historical, business, informational, and workplace documents."

NAME _____ DATE _____

ACTOR NAMED

An active-voice subject names who performs the key action. This choice can assign responsibility rather than simply report an outcome.

The beekeeper smashed the hive before winter.

ACTOR UNNAMED

The key action uses passive voice without naming who did it. This choice can focus attention on the outcome or leave responsibility uncertain.

The lantern was extinguished at midnight.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle NAMED or HIDDEN for each excerpt, then choose one of each and write two sentences per excerpt explaining how its grammar shapes a reader's view of responsibility.

1.	Historical account: The governor ordered soldiers to burn the village archives. The next morning, residents had no record of the land their families owned.	NAMED HIDDEN
2.	Workplace memo: The safety complaints were removed from the monthly report. The report was sent to staff without any note about the missing pages.	NAMED HIDDEN
3.	Fiction: Her last letter was returned unopened. The red stamp on its envelope looked like a verdict.	NAMED HIDDEN
4.	Poetry: I tore the map at the river's bend. Now every road on its two halves leads me away from home.	NAMED HIDDEN
5.	Business statement: The board raised subscription fees despite the promised price freeze. Customers now pay more for the same service.	NAMED HIDDEN
6.	Historical account: The voting rolls were destroyed on the eve of the election. Thousands of names disappeared from the official count.	NAMED HIDDEN
7.	Fiction: Mara hid the medicine behind the loose brick. When her brother asked for it, she pointed him toward the empty shelf.	NAMED HIDDEN
8.	Informational article: Several water samples were mislabeled before the results were published. The error made the contamination appear less widespread.	NAMED HIDDEN

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Choose one of each and write two sentences per excerpt explaining how its grammar shapes a reader's view of responsibility.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write two sentences for each category about the same school decision: in NAMED, use active voice to name the decision-maker; in HIDDEN, use passive voice without naming the decision-maker.

NAMED

HIDDEN

CHALLENGE

Choose one HIDDEN excerpt and rewrite its key action to name a plausible actor; then write one sentence explaining how that change affects responsibility without claiming the original identified that actor.

ANSWER KEY

Who Took Action?

GRADE 12 · 12.LL.19

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	Historical account: The governor ordered soldiers to burn the village archives. The next morning, residents had no record of the land their families owned.	**NAMED**	The active-voice subject names the governor as the person who ordered the destruction, directing responsibility toward that official.
2	Workplace memo: The safety complaints were removed from the monthly report. The report was sent to staff without any note about the missing pages.	**HIDDEN**	Agentless passive verbs report the removal and distribution without identifying who carried them out.
3	Fiction: Her last letter was returned unopened. The red stamp on its envelope looked like a verdict.	**HIDDEN**	The agentless passive verb hides who returned the letter, making the rejection feel impersonal.
4	Poetry: I tore the map at the river's bend. Now every road on its two halves leads me away from home.	**NAMED**	The speaker names themself as the person who tore the map, making the loss partly a consequence of their own action.
5	Business statement: The board raised subscription fees despite the promised price freeze. Customers now pay more for the same service.	**NAMED**	The active-voice subject identifies the board as responsible for the price change.
6	Historical account: The voting rolls were destroyed on the eve of the election. Thousands of names disappeared from the official count.	**HIDDEN**	The agentless passive verb states what happened to the rolls but withholds who destroyed them.
7	Fiction: Mara hid the medicine behind the loose brick. When her brother asked for it, she pointed him toward the empty shelf.	**NAMED**	Active-voice subjects identify Mara as the person who hid the medicine and misled her brother.
8	Informational article: Several water samples were mislabeled before the results were published. The error made the contamination appear less widespread.	**HIDDEN**	The agentless passive verb does not identify who mislabeled the samples, even though the error changed how the results appeared.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Task: Choose one of each and write two sentences per excerpt explaining how its grammar shapes a reader's view of responsibility.
Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **NAMED**: The principal canceled the spring concert. Musicians packed away their instruments in silence.
- **HIDDEN**: The spring concert was canceled. Instruments were packed away in silence.

Challenge: Item 2: The department manager removed the safety complaints from the monthly report. Naming the manager directs responsibility toward that person, although the original memo does not say who removed the complaints.

Classify the grammar of each excerpt's key action, not every verb it contains. For Part 2, look for both a grammatical clue and an explanation of its effect on meaning.