Who Takes Focus

How sentence voice shifts attention in stories and documents

9.LL.16 "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 _____

ACTIVE VOICE

The subject does the action. This voice draws attention to the doer.

Fireflies lit the empty field.

PASSIVE VOICE

The subject receives the action. This voice draws attention to what happened or what was affected, and it may leave out the doer.

The trophy was carried into the gym.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle ACTIVE or PASSIVE for each sentence, then choose one item from each category and explain the grammar clue and what it makes readers notice.

1.	The bridge was repaired before dawn.	ACTIVE PASSIVE
2.	The final report was approved by the board.	ACTIVE PASSIVE
3.	Mara locked the attic door.	ACTIVE PASSIVE
4.	The votes were counted twice.	ACTIVE PASSIVE
5.	Our crew ships orders each Friday.	ACTIVE PASSIVE
6.	Night swallowed the last bell.	ACTIVE PASSIVE
7.	The lantern was hidden beneath the stairs.	ACTIVE PASSIVE
8.	All visitors must be escorted by staff.	ACTIVE PASSIVE

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Choose one item from each category and explain the grammar clue and what it makes readers notice.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one original ACTIVE sentence and one original PASSIVE sentence about the same event, shifting attention from the doer to what was affected.

ACTIVE _____

PASSIVE _____

CHALLENGE

Rewrite item 2 in the other voice, then explain in one sentence how the new voice changes what readers notice.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 9 · 9.LL.16

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The bridge was repaired before dawn.	**PASSIVE**	The bridge receives the action in 'was repaired'; the sentence focuses on the repair, not who did it.
2	The final report was approved by the board.	**PASSIVE**	The report receives the action in 'was approved'; the report comes before the board.
3	Mara locked the attic door.	**ACTIVE**	Mara performs the action, putting her decision in focus.
4	The votes were counted twice.	**PASSIVE**	The votes receive the action in 'were counted'; the counters are not named.
5	Our crew ships orders each Friday.	**ACTIVE**	The crew performs the action, emphasizing who handles the orders.
6	Night swallowed the last bell.	**ACTIVE**	Night is the subject performing the imagined action, creating a vivid image.
7	The lantern was hidden beneath the stairs.	**PASSIVE**	The lantern receives the action in 'was hidden'; the person who hid it is not named.
8	All visitors must be escorted by staff.	**PASSIVE**	Visitors receive the action in 'must be escorted'; the rule puts visitors first.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Task: Choose one item from each category and explain the grammar clue and what it makes readers notice.
Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **ACTIVE**: The custodian polished the windows.
- **PASSIVE**: The windows were polished by the custodian.

Challenge: The board approved the final report. The revision puts the board first, drawing attention to who made the decision rather than to the report.

For Part 2, an explanation should name a grammar clue and connect it to the sentence's focus. For example, item 2 uses 'was approved' and puts the report first, while item 3 puts Mara, the doer, first.