

Rumor at Deadline

Interpret how figurative language shapes a newsroom decision.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5a "Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline Leo's "ancient history" claim in paragraph 1, Maya's "fastest way" claim in paragraph 2, and "certainty can be a costume" in paragraph 3. Number these three targets 1-3. Use the questions to explain their meanings and effects.

The Verification Pause

- ① At 6:10 on election night, Maya's phone lit up with messages claiming that the student council vote had been hacked. In the newsroom, the printers rattled, laptops glowed, and every screen seemed to shout a different rumor. "If we wait another minute, the story will be ancient history," Leo said, refreshing the district website until his thumb went numb. Maya watched the headlines multiply like weeds after rain. The staff had promised readers an update by 6:30 that evening, but no official statement had appeared. Outside, students pressed against the newsroom window, hungry for an answer.
- ② Maya opened a shared document and typed a headline, then deleted it. "The fastest way to publish is to stop," she said. Leo stared at her as if she had announced that fire could freeze. Instead of posting, Maya called the district technology office, compared screenshots, and asked the election adviser to check the paper ballots. The room grew quieter with each unanswered call. Even the clock, which had been racing all afternoon, seemed to drag its feet. At 6:42, the adviser reported a software display error, not altered votes. Maya wrote the update only after two sources confirmed the explanation.

- ③ The final article appeared after sunset. It did not roar across the internet or rescue the newsroom from embarrassment. It simply stated that a display problem had caused the alarming screen messages and that the ballots remained secure. By morning, students who had expected a scandal were arguing about cafeteria prices instead. The rumor, so loud the night before, now looked smaller than the empty coffee cups on the newsroom table. Maya saved a screenshot of the first false claim beside the finished article. She wanted next year's staff to see that certainty can be a costume, especially when a crowd is waiting.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- ① Interpret Leo's ancient history hyperbole. How does it reveal his state of mind?

- ② Explain the "fastest way" paradox using two verification actions. Does the text establish a literal time saving?

- ③ Explain how the clock's racing and drag its feet descriptions shape the scene's tension.

- ④ Interpret certainty can be a costume. How does this metaphor shape the ending?

3

YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a scene of four to six sentences about a decision under pressure. Include and label one clear hyperbole and one paradox. After the scene, write one separate sentence explaining how both figures shape its tone or message.

Scene and interpretation

Keep the scene and its explanation in separate paragraphs. Make the exaggeration clear and give context that explains the apparent contradiction.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline Leo's "ancient history" claim in paragraph 1, Maya's "fastest way" claim in paragraph 2, and "certainty can be a costume" in paragraph 3. Number these three targets 1-3. Use the questions to explain their meanings and effects. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Interpret Leo's ancient history hyperbole. How does it reveal his state of mind?	Leo fears the story will soon seem outdated. His exaggeration shows intense pressure to publish immediately.
2	Explain the "fastest way" paradox using two verification actions. Does the text establish a literal time saving?	Pausing permits calls, screenshot checks and a ballot check. The paradox treats verification as progress toward a trustworthy story; no comparison proves a literal time saving.
3	Explain how the clock's racing and drag its feet descriptions shape the scene's tension.	Time seems fast during the rush and slow during the wait for evidence. This personification builds anxiety.
4	Interpret certainty can be a costume. How does this metaphor shape the ending?	Confident claims can conceal weak evidence. The metaphor closes with a warning against trusting appearances under crowd pressure.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Scene: Ten minutes before the school play, the cast argued over a missing prop. "We have searched this room a million times," Jo said [hyperbole]. "The fastest way forward is to stop," Lin replied [paradox]. They stopped repeating the same search, checked the prop list, and noticed a different shelf they had overlooked. Jo found the prop there, and the cast returned to rehearsal.

Explanation: The hyperbole conveys frantic frustration, while the paradox turns a pause into purposeful progress and shifts the scene toward calm cooperation.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

Check four to six scene sentences plus one explanation. The model has five scene sentences, an exaggerated million searches and a paradox resolved by checking the list. Accept supported alternatives.