

A Name Out of Place

Build a narrative opening from an observation, a conflict and a choice.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3a "Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the first clue that the label may be wrong and a detail showing why it matters to the narrator. Circle names or pronouns establishing the point of view. Number three connected actions that follow the discovery.

Twelve Minutes Before Opening

- ① At 5:48, I stood beside my great-grandmother's portrait in the school library, checking labels for local-history night. I had typed her name beneath a factory worker's letter and imagined how pleased my mother would be to see it. Then I noticed the date: 1918. My great-grandmother Elena had been born in 1934. I read both dates again, hoping one would change. Across the room, Ms. Alvarez rehearsed her welcome while Mara stacked programs by the door. In twelve minutes, visitors would begin reading a story I could no longer trust.
- ② I pulled the intake folder from beneath the table. Elena's name appeared beside Donor; the line marked Author said Unknown. I had turned the person who preserved the letter into the person who wrote it. When Mara reached for another program, I caught her sleeve and pointed to the record. She glanced at the portrait, then at me. 'Can we fix it?' she whispered. I wanted to say that the date was only a small mistake, but an unnamed worker had already lost a voice beneath my family's familiar name.
- ③ Mara found a blank label, and I walked toward Ms. Alvarez with the folder open. Through the glass doors, I could see my mother waving to someone in line. For a moment, I pictured leaving the display alone until everyone went home. Then I looked down at Unknown, the word I had ignored when I was eager to finish. Ms. Alvarez stopped rehearsing as I approached. 'Is everything ready?' she asked. I set the folder beside her notes. 'There's something I need to change,' I said, before I could decide how to explain it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What observation creates the problem, and why is it personally significant to the narrator?

2 How does first-person point of view reveal a conflict that an outside observer might miss? Cite a thought or reaction.

3 Trace three connected actions after the date is noticed. How does one action cause or motivate the next?

4 How does the final decision grow from the earlier observations while leaving the story open?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one 130-160-word first-person opening paragraph in which an observation makes a situation urgent. Introduce the narrator and another character, establish why the problem matters, and connect at least three events through clear cause, time or response. Let the opening create a question or choice that keeps the reader interested; you need not resolve the whole story.

Create stakes and forward motion

Choose a specific setting and meaningful deadline or consequence. Let the narrator's thoughts reveal what another character cannot see. Make events grow from the discovery rather than listing unrelated actions. Write one complete 130-160-word paragraph; keep its point of view consistent.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the first clue that the label may be wrong and a detail showing why it matters to the narrator. Circle names or pronouns establishing the point of view. Number three connected actions that follow the discovery. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What observation creates the problem, and why is it personally significant to the narrator?	The letter is dated 1918, but the narrator's great-grandmother Elena was born in 1934. The narrator had credited the letter to Elena and expected the family to be proud of the display.
2	How does first-person point of view reveal a conflict that an outside observer might miss? Cite a thought or reaction.	We hear the narrator hoping the dates will change, wanting to minimize the mistake or imagining leaving the display alone. These thoughts reveal tension between family pride and correcting the attribution.
3	Trace three connected actions after the date is noticed. How does one action cause or motivate the next?	The narrator checks the intake folder, discovers the donor/author mistake, shows Mara the record and approaches Ms. Alvarez with it. The new evidence motivates each next step. Accept any three connected actions with an explanation.
4	How does the final decision grow from the earlier observations while leaving the story open?	Seeing Unknown again reminds the narrator of the ignored record, prompting an admission to Ms. Alvarez. The narrator chooses to speak, but the label, the unidentified author and the family's response remain unresolved.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Narrative opening: At five fifty-four, my grandmother's laugh burst from the speakers, followed by a story she had asked me to leave out of our oral-history program. I stopped playback so abruptly that Eli looked up from the welcome desk. In six minutes, our guests would enter, and she would be sitting in the front row. I opened the audio folder and found two files with almost identical names. The one I had tested that morning was not the one loaded on the laptop. When I showed Eli the screen, he turned his cue sheet over and wrote the correct filename in large letters. I searched the backup drive while he held the opening slide. Then my phone lit up with a message from Grandma: Outside now. My cursor hovered over a file I had not yet checked, and the room suddenly seemed much too quiet.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

Require one 130-160-word opening paragraph with a consistent first-person viewpoint, another character, meaningful stakes and at least three connected events. A deadline, discovery or difficult choice can create urgency without a physical emergency. The sample stops playback, checks files, enlists Eli and searches the backup while a guest's arrival increases pressure; the final uncertainty keeps the opening active. Accept varied plots and styles. Reading answers should cite the dates, donor/author distinction and narrator's thoughts or choices. The passage and sample are original fiction; no real archive or family history is claimed.