

What Gets Saved

Trace how craft turns a crisis into a question about memory.

12.P.AC.1 "Reading like a Writer: Interpret texts through the author's lens by identifying, analyzing, and evaluating craft techniques that are connected to the responses, thoughts, decisions, and questions triggered by the text."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two sensory images, circle one moment when the narrator withholds or questions a decision, and box the final uncertainty about the library. Beside each mark, note the response, thought or question the author's choice creates.

The Cart

- ① At 4:17, the evacuation alert lit my phone while I was shelving returns at the Arroyo Vista Library. Outside, the sky had turned the color of a bruised peach, and ash drifted past the windows in slow, deliberate flakes. Ms. Ibarra, our director, did not raise her voice. She slid the local-history boxes from the top shelf, then handed me a cart. "Photographs first," she said. I wanted to ask why photographs mattered when houses were burning, but the question stayed behind my teeth. The fire siren began its thin, mechanical wail.
- ② The cart rattled over every seam in the tile, making the framed images chatter against one another. In one, a 1938 parade filled Main Street, children balanced on curbs, mouths open around paper flags. In another, my grandfather stood beside the dry riverbed, younger than I had ever imagined him. I wrapped each frame in a newspaper printed with headlines about drought. That accident of paper felt cruel, almost staged. Still, Ms. Ibarra kept choosing, not rescuing everything, and her calm made her decisions seem heavier than panic.
- ③ When we reached the loading bay, a volunteer firefighter waved us toward the parking lot. Ms. Ibarra stopped beside a carton labeled MAPS, 1902-1976. For one second, her hand rested on the lid. Then she left it. I watched the box remain in the orange light, ordinary and impossible to replace. Later, from the highway, I saw the library roof through smoke. It was still there, then hidden, then there again. I did not know whether that was hope or only wind changing direction. Beside me, the photographs leaned together in the back seat, silent as witnesses.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- 1** How does the image of the sky as a “bruised peach” and the ash as “deliberate flakes” shape the mood of the opening? What response does this imagery invite?

- 2** Why might the author call the drought headlines around the photographs “cruel, almost staged”? Explain how this detail develops the narrator’s thoughts about the emergency.

- 3** Analyze the contrast between the narrator’s unspoken question about saving photographs and Ms. Ibarra’s calm choices. How does this contrast position the reader to think about her decisions?

- 4** Evaluate the ending’s craft. Why does the author repeat that the roof is “still there, then hidden, then there again” before comparing the photographs to “witnesses”?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90-120-word scene from the viewpoint of a curator during a different immediate crisis. Use one concrete image, include at least one complete sentence of five words or fewer, and end the scene with a genuine question. Then add exactly two sentences explaining a craft choice and the response you want it to create.

1. Compose the scene

Write the scene only in this space. Check the 90-120-word range, viewpoint, concrete image, complete short sentence and final question. The situation may be invented. Aim for purposeful craft rather than a checklist of disconnected details.

[illegible]

2. Explain the effect

Write exactly two sentences connecting a deliberate craft choice to the response you intend from a reader. These sentences are separate from, and do not count toward, the scene's word range.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two sensory images, circle one moment when the narrator withholds or questions a decision, and box the final uncertainty about the library. Beside each mark, note the response, thought or question the author's choice creates. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the image of the sky as a “bruised peach” and the ash as “deliberate flakes” shape the mood of the opening? What response does this imagery invite?	The unsettling colors and slow-moving ash create an ominous, unnatural mood. They invite the reader to feel that danger is approaching before the characters fully act.
2	Why might the author call the drought headlines around the photographs “cruel, almost staged”? Explain how this detail develops the narrator’s thoughts about the emergency.	The coincidence links the library’s historical records to the present environmental crisis. It makes the narrator feel as if the disaster is painfully arranged and larger than any one person’s control.
3	Analyze the contrast between the narrator’s unspoken question about saving photographs and Ms. Ibarra’s calm choices. How does this contrast position the reader to think about her decisions?	The narrator’s silence shows doubt about prioritizing records during an evacuation, while Ms. Ibarra’s calm suggests deliberate triage. The contrast asks readers to weigh the value of preserving community memory against the urgency of the crisis.
4	Evaluate the ending’s craft. Why does the author repeat that the roof is “still there, then hidden, then there again” before comparing the photographs to “witnesses”?	The repetition imitates the unstable view through smoke and keeps the library’s fate uncertain. Calling the photographs witnesses presents them as evidence of human lives and leaves readers questioning what can endure after a disaster.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At noon, the museum's pipes burst above the textile room. Water struck the floor in hard silver ropes. I grabbed the blue quilt first, though its faded stitches had never impressed visitors. "Not that one," Lena said, pointing to the royal banner in its glass case. Her voice was calm, which made me angry. The alarm stopped. Then it clicked again. I carried the quilt toward the stairs and looked back. The banner shone under the leaking ceiling, bright as a command. Would anyone remember the hands that made the smaller thing?

The two short sentences about the alarm interrupt the flow, making its uneven rhythm feel abrupt and tense. The final question directs that tension toward whose history a museum chooses to preserve.

Accept specific craft analysis and defensible effects on readers; the key gives examples, not the only interpretation. The model scene is within 90-120 words. "The alarm stopped." has three words and "Then it clicked again." has four; both are complete sentences. The scene ends with a question and is followed by exactly two separate explanatory sentences. Count only the scene for the stated range. Preserve the original story's uncertainty rather than claiming the library burned down.