

A Moment Before It Falls

Control a scene's pace to create tension and relief.

6.T.T.1.e "Apply narrative techniques to enhance writing, engage audiences, and achieve specific purposes. (C)"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read this original practice scene. Circle dialogue and underline sensory details. Notice where several sentences slow a brief moment. Consider how the details build tension before the ending shifts toward relief; then use these techniques in your own writing.

The Bridge on the Table

When the classroom door swung open, Maya's paper bridge trembled on the display table. One cardboard support tilted toward the edge. Maya had spent the week building it for the class showcase. "Don't move the table," she told Leo. Across the room, chairs scraped as visitors began to arrive.

Maya slid one hand toward the leaning support. The paper deck dipped. She stopped, holding her breath. A thin thread of glue stretched between two pieces of cardboard. "I can hold this side," Leo whispered. He rested his palm beneath the deck while Maya eased the support back under it. For a moment, neither of them let go.

Then Maya tested the support with one finger. It stayed upright. Leo slowly drew his hand away, and the bridge stood on its own. Maya let out a breath she had almost forgotten to take. "Now let's move it away from the edge," she said. This time, they lifted the base together. The first visitors reached the table just as she straightened the title card.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How does the middle paragraph slow the scene? Identify two separate beats and explain their effect.

- 2** Choose a line of dialogue or a sensory detail. How does it help create tension or relief at that point?

- 3** Why does the writer mention a week of work and the arriving visitors? How might removing those details change the scene?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a narrative scene for classmates in which a small problem becomes tense and is resolved. Make readers care about the outcome. Use purposeful dialogue, sensory detail and slowed action at the critical moment. Choose your own situation or invent a different problem with a class project. Develop the scene as fully as it needs; there is no sentence quota.

1. Plan the reader's experience

Name the problem, why it matters to the character, and how it resolves. Identify the moment you will slow down and the feeling you want classmates to have.

2. Draft the scene

Establish the situation, develop the critical moment through separate action beats, and bring it to a resolution. Use dialogue and sensory detail for a purpose. Give the ending room to show the change in feeling.

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

3. Revise for effect

Read your scene to a partner, who identifies where tension is strongest. Record that response. Rewrite a short part here to improve pacing, dialogue or sensory detail, then explain the effect of your revision.

[illegible]

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Read this original practice scene. Circle dialogue and underline sensory details. Notice where several sentences slow a brief moment. Consider how the details build tension before the ending shifts toward relief; then use these techniques in your own writing. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the middle paragraph slow the scene? Identify two separate beats and explain their effect.	Maya slides a hand toward the support, then the deck dips and she stops. Leo supports the deck while she repositions the support, and they wait before letting go. Separate actions make readers experience the uncertainty moment by moment.
2	Choose a line of dialogue or a sensory detail. How does it help create tension or relief at that point?	"Don't move the table" signals that movement could harm the bridge. The stretched glue makes its fragility visible. At the end, Maya's released breath suggests relief. Accept supported explanations; not every detail has the same effect.
3	Why does the writer mention a week of work and the arriving visitors? How might removing those details change the scene?	They establish why the bridge matters and why time feels short. Without them, a tilted support could seem less important, so readers might feel less tension.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Plan

A student's clay bird has a loose wing just before a class display. The student wants classmates to see the careful work. Slow the moment of supporting the wing and repairing its joint; end when the wing stays in place.

Draft example

A hairline crack appeared where the clay wing joined Sam's bird. He had shaped every feather with a toothpick, and the class display was about to begin. "Bring the spare clay," he whispered. His partner reached for a small damp lump.

Sam cupped his fingers beneath the wing. Its tip brushed his palm, cool and smooth. He pressed fresh clay into the joint. A grain broke loose. Sam froze. Then he worked the new clay gently across the crack while his partner steadied the base. Slowly, he lowered his hand. The wing remained level.

"It's holding," his partner said. Sam checked once more before setting the bird on its display card. His shoulders dropped. He could finally look at the whole bird instead of that single fragile join.

Illustrative feedback and revision

A listener might say the tense moment is when the grain breaks loose. Revision: "A grain broke loose. It landed on the table with a tiny tick. Sam kept his hand beneath the wing." The added sound and separate action hold the reader in that uncertain instant. Students should record their actual partner response and revise their own scene.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

Assess a developed narrative scene and a meaningful revision for a stated audience effect. Dialogue, sensory detail and slowed action should serve the scene rather than satisfy a count. Separate action beats can slow time; a compressed list alone may not. The final change should establish resolution and a shift in feeling. Do not require six sentences or a fixed number of details. The model and source are original fictional practice scenes. Students may use other situations and different supported effects; evaluate the actual writing and revision, not only their plan.