

Harbor's Quiet Echo

Analyze how sound, imagery, and line structure shape a poem's meaning.

11.RL.2.A "Interpret and analyze how the sound and imagery of poetry support the subject, mood, form, and theme and appeal to the reader's senses."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read this original free-verse poem aloud. Underline two sound details and circle two sensory images. Mark one pause or line ending that affects your reading. Note a supported change in mood; there is no required count of shifts.

At the Empty Dock

Stanza 1

Before dawn, the harbor holds its breath.
Ropes tap the masts, tap, tap.
A buoy tolls once.
Salt settles on my lips.
Fish crates wear a thin skin of frost.
I carry Father's empty thermos,
listening for the engine
that will not return.

Stanza 2

At first light, gulls cut the gray.
Their cries scrape the sky, sharp as hooks.
The tide whispers hush, hush.
I remember his hands: diesel and oranges.
A ferry enters the channel, low and blue.
Its horn rolls over roofs like thunder.
Windows catch fire in the cold glass,
then dim again to gray.

Stanza 3

By noon, boots thud and carts rattle.
Still, the missing engine beats beneath them.
I set the thermos on a sun-warmed bollard;
its lid holds a broken strip of sea.
When I leave, the harbor is loud,
but the space beside me
rings clearer than any nearby bell.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- 1 Which two sounds in the first stanza create the quiet, expectant mood? Explain how they affect the silence.

- 2 How does the image of the father's hands smelling of "diesel and oranges" develop the poem's subject?

- 3 How do the three stanzas move from before dawn to noon? Explain how the line break after "listening for the engine" contributes to that movement and to the theme.

- 4** How does the ending contrast the loud harbor with the “space beside me”? Explain the effect of placing “but the space beside me” on a line of its own.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 6-8-line free-verse poem about waiting for a person or place. Include at least two sound details and two sensory images. Then write exactly two separate analytical sentences: explain how a sound and an image develop mood and theme. Keep verse line breaks visible.

Your poem

Use 6-8 distinct verse lines; attend to the effect of each ending.

Your analysis

Write exactly two sentences explaining a sound, an image, mood and theme.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Read this original free-verse poem aloud. Underline two sound details and circle two sensory images. Mark one pause or line ending that affects your reading. Note a supported change in mood; there is no required count of shifts. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which two sounds in the first stanza create the quiet, expectant mood? Explain how they affect the silence.	The ropes that “tap, tap” and the buoy that “tolls once” are small, isolated sounds. They make the surrounding silence feel wider and emphasize the speaker's waiting.
2	How does the image of the father's hands smelling of “diesel and oranges” develop the poem's subject?	The smell recalls the absent father through a specific sensory memory. It makes the speaker's wait at the harbor personal rather than merely describing a place.
3	How do the three stanzas move from before dawn to noon? Explain how the line break after “listening for the engine” contributes to that movement and to the theme.	The harbor grows busier as time passes, yet the absence persists. The first stanza briefly leaves engine at the line ending before that will not return denies the expected arrival. That interruption focuses the waiting; later noise cannot fill the missing person's place.
4	How does the ending contrast the loud harbor with the “space beside me”? Explain the effect of placing “but the space beside me” on a line of its own.	The loud harbor continues its ordinary work, but the isolated line directs attention to a personal absence. The next line makes that emptiness seem more audible than a bell. Sound and visual isolation develop the idea that surrounding activity cannot erase loss.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Poem: six verse lines

Rain needles the library windows.

The return slot clacks, clacks.

Dust tastes dry on my tongue.

A radiator hisses beside the blue chair.

Your rough wool scarf waits on its hook.

I turn each page, waiting for the door.

Analysis: two sentences

The clacking slot makes the room seem impatient and lonely, showing how ordinary sounds sharpen the wait.

The rough scarf gives absence a touchable reminder, supporting the theme that familiar objects can keep a missing person close.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

The three numbered blocks are actual stanzas, with 8, 8 and 7 separately printed verse lines. They are not prose paragraphs. Accept supported moods and interpretations without requiring three shifts. The father is absent and the engine will not return; the poem does not establish the cause, so do not require a claim about a death at sea. Two sound details may also be sensory images, provided students explain both functions. The model separates six poem lines from two analytical sentences. No fixed rhyme or meter is required.