

The Missing Key

Study how a narrator builds a tense moment from problem to reflection.

ELA.9.C.1.2 "Write narratives using narrative techniques, varied transitions, and a clearly established point of view."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline five transition words or phrases, circle two details that reveal the narrator's thoughts or feelings, and write 1, 2, and 3 beside the key moments that move the scene from problem to solution.

Before the Doors Opened

- ① At 6:40 on Saturday morning, I stood behind the curtain of the Riverside Theater, holding the brass key that had belonged to my grandmother. The auditorium smelled of dust, paint, and the rain dripping from my coat. In twenty minutes, I was supposed to unlock the display case for the theater's centennial exhibit. Instead, the key slipped from my cold fingers and vanished through a gap in the stage floor. "Don't move," Mr. Alvarez whispered, kneeling beside me. My stomach tightened. I had promised my family that I could handle one simple job.
- ② First, Mr. Alvarez shone his phone light into the gap while I lay flat on the boards. The beam caught the key on a crossbar, just beyond my reach. For a second, I considered crawling after it, but the dark space smelled of damp wood, and loose wires curled below me. "We need a plan, not a rescue mission," he said. Meanwhile, guests began gathering in the lobby, their voices swelling like water behind a door. I grabbed a long paint stirrer from a supply cart. Slowly, I hooked the key ring and pulled. When it scraped across the floor, I finally breathed again.
- ③ Afterward, I carried the key to the display case as the lobby clock struck seven. My hands still shook, but I fit the key into the lock and heard the small click. The case opened to reveal old playbills, black-and-white photographs, and a program from my grandmother's first performance. Mr. Alvarez smiled. "Your family will be proud," he said. Before the doors opened, I placed the key on its velvet hook and wiped the rain from my sleeves. I had arrived wanting to prove I was dependable. By the time the first visitors entered, I understood that being dependable also meant asking for help before fear made a problem worse.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What point of view tells this narrative? Give one phrase from the passage that proves your answer.

2 Choose two transition words or phrases from the passage. Explain what each one shows about the order or timing of events.

3 Identify two sensory details that make the space below the stage seem risky. Explain how one of the details builds tension.

4 What does the narrator understand by the end of the passage? What event helps lead to that understanding?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 100-130 word, three-paragraph first-person narrative about solving a small problem before an important event. Use at least three varied transitions, one line of dialogue, and two sensory details to make your point of view clear.

Paragraph 1 - establish the problem

Set the scene in first person. Show what matters and introduce the problem.

Paragraph 2 - develop the response

Use dialogue, sensory details and a purposeful transition to develop the action and your narrator's reaction.

Paragraph 3 - resolve and reflect

Show the outcome and a change in thinking or feeling. Check all three paragraphs together: 100-130 words, three varied transitions, dialogue and two sensory details.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline five transition words or phrases, circle two details that reveal the narrator's thoughts or feelings, and write 1, 2, and 3 beside the key moments that move the scene from problem to solution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What point of view tells this narrative? Give one phrase from the passage that proves your answer.	First-person point of view. Evidence includes "I stood behind the curtain" or another accurate use of "I."
2	Choose two transition words or phrases from the passage. Explain what each one shows about the order or timing of events.	Answers vary. For example, "First" begins Mr. Alvarez's attempt to locate the key, and "Meanwhile" shows that guests are gathering while the narrator works on the problem.
3	Identify two sensory details that make the space below the stage seem risky. Explain how one of the details builds tension.	The space smells of "damp wood," and "loose wires curled below" the narrator. Either detail makes the space seem unsafe and increases tension about reaching the key.
4	What does the narrator understand by the end of the passage? What event helps lead to that understanding?	The narrator learns that being dependable includes asking for help before fear worsens a problem. Mr. Alvarez helps the narrator recover the key after warning that they need a plan.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before the debate tournament, I discovered that the note cards for my opening statement were missing. My backpack smelled like peppermint gum and damp wool, but the cards were nowhere inside. At first, panic made my thoughts race faster than the hallway clock.

Meanwhile, students filled the cafeteria, dragging chairs across the tile. "Check the printer room," my partner Nia said. I wanted to blame her for borrowing my folder, yet I followed her suggestion and searched the recycling bin.

Finally, I found the cards beneath a stack of flyers, their blue edges curled from a spilled drink. I dried them under the warm hand dryer and returned before our round began. By choosing to search instead of accuse, I protected our teamwork and felt ready to speak.

Accept equivalent evidence and explanations that accurately connect transitions, point of view, and narrative techniques to the passage. For the writing task, check for a clear first-person perspective, a complete narrative sequence, varied transitions, dialogue, and sensory details. The three model paragraphs show setup, response and resolution. The 6:40 setup allows twenty minutes before the clock strikes seven. Accept different purposeful paragraph boundaries.