

Words at the Door

Trace how craft choices shape a reader's response to a public decision.

11.PAC.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 Read this original fictional scene. Underline three craft choices and add a margin note naming the thought, feeling or question each triggers for you. Distinguish what the narrator shows from what you infer about the author's purpose.

The Reading Room

- ① At 7:12, Mara stood outside the locked doors of the East Branch Library, holding a cardboard sign that read SAVE OUR TABLES. Rain threaded through the awning and tapped the letters into darker blue. Across the street, the council chamber glowed like a fishbowl. Inside, officials would vote on selling the library's reading room to a developer. Mara had planned to speak for two minutes. Now her note cards felt thin as receipts. She reread her opening line and wondered whether anyone who had never needed the room could understand.
- ② When the meeting began, Mara sat beneath a clock whose second hand jerked forward, paused, then jerked again. Each stop made the silence seem intentional. A developer described an "activated plaza" with cafés, office suites, and a rooftop garden. No one mentioned the worn atlas table where Mara's father had taught her to trace the river's bends. When the chair asked for public comments, Mara rose too quickly. Her knee struck the desk, and the sharp sound traveled farther than her first sentence. She could return to her seat, she thought, or let the room hear how much the library had held.

- ③ She began not with statistics but with a question: “Where will a student go when home is too loud to think?” The chamber changed only slightly. A council member stopped sorting papers. The developer looked at the floor. Mara named the atlas table, the after-school tutors, and the winter afternoons when heat and internet mattered more than silence. Then she placed her unused note cards on the desk. “This room is not empty space,” she said. “It is a place people have already filled.” As applause rose from the back row, Mara did not smile. The chair reached for the agenda. Mara kept her hands on the desk and waited.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- ① How does the clock's movement shape your experience of Mara's wait? Connect a specific detail to a reader response, rather than only naming a mood.

- ② Compare activated plaza with the memory of the atlas table. What judgment might this contrast invite, and what does the scene leave you unable to conclude about the developer?

- ③ Evaluate the author's decision to end before the vote. Would showing the result better serve this scene's focus? Defend either view using two details and explain the tradeoff.

- 4** Imagine replacing the note cards felt thin as receipts with she felt nervous. Which is more effective for this scene and its readers? Explain what is gained or lost.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

In 90 to 110 words, evaluate how effectively this author makes readers care about Mara without revealing the vote. Connect two specific craft choices to responses the text triggered for you. Explain one strength and one limitation or tradeoff, and distinguish a supported interpretation from a conclusion the scene cannot prove.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Read this original fictional scene. Underline three craft choices and add a margin note naming the thought, feeling or question each triggers for you. Distinguish what the narrator shows from what you infer about the author's purpose. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the clock's movement shape your experience of Mara's wait? Connect a specific detail to a reader response, rather than only naming a mood.	Its second hand jerks, pauses and jerks again. This interrupted movement can make time feel slow and make a reader anticipate Mara's struggle to speak. Accept another supported reader response; the description alone does not prove that officials deliberately intimidate her.
2	Compare activated plaza with the memory of the atlas table. What judgment might this contrast invite, and what does the scene leave you unable to conclude about the developer?	The abstract promotional label contrasts with a specific family memory, inviting concern that redevelopment overlooks existing human value. The scene does not establish the developer's full motives or the plan's total effects; his looking down is not proof of guilt.
3	Evaluate the author's decision to end before the vote. Would showing the result better serve this scene's focus? Defend either view using two details and explain the tradeoff.	Keeping the vote open can center Mara's risky choice and leave readers questioning whether she was heard; her weak first sentence and the final waiting support that focus. Showing the result could clarify consequences but reduce uncertainty. Accept a defended preference for either ending with a specific tradeoff.
4	Imagine replacing the note cards felt thin as receipts with she felt nervous. Which is more effective for this scene and its readers? Explain what is gained or lost.	The simile makes anxiety physical through an ordinary object and connects preparation with fragility; a direct statement gives quicker clarity but loses that concrete association. Accept either judgment when connected to the scene and reader effect.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The scene makes Mara's fear tangible when her note cards feel thin as receipts. I picture something flimsy in her hands, which makes speaking seem risky despite her preparation. The atlas table also connects the room to an ordinary family experience; that detail makes me care about what could disappear. These choices make preservation emotionally persuasive, but they give little space to other users or the developer's reasons. The open vote keeps me wondering whether officials listened. I can support a reading that values Mara's courage, but cannot conclude that the council rejects her or that the developer feels guilty.

Accept text-supported judgments and varied reader responses. A student's interpretation need not match the model. Require actual evaluation of the supplied author's choices, including a strength and a limitation or tradeoff; merely listing devices or writing an imitation is insufficient. Distinguish Mara's perspective and the reader's inference from a proven author intention. The final actions leave the vote unresolved. Neither the developer looking at the floor nor the applause establishes private motives or the eventual outcome. The scene and institutions are fictional.