Garden Above Asphalt

Analyze how poetic choices shape a theme of persistence.

10.T.T.4.a "Read, discuss, evaluate, and critique a variety of poetic texts, considering poetic techniques used to present and design content and their associated implications on meaning and/or theme. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two comparisons or examples of personification, circle the repeated wording, and put a star beside one detail that shows a change in Maya's thinking. Use your marks to consider how the poem builds its meaning.

Rooftop Tomorrow

1 At noon, the apartment roofs shimmer like pans left on a stove. On the seventh floor, Maya opens the garden gate, and basil lifts its green tongues toward the light. Below, buses cough at the curb, carrying heat from block to block. She pours one silver pitcher into the soil. The water disappears without a sound, as if the roots have been waiting with open mouths. Still, one tomato holds a bead of rain from last night, a small red lantern refusing to go out.

2 Tomorrow, she thinks, tomorrow, the vines will cover the wire fence. The words return as she works, not because she is certain but because the city has taught her to count small changes. A bee circles the marigolds, then vanishes behind an air conditioner. Maya presses a seed into a cracked pot and labels it SUNFLOWER in thick black ink. Around her, windows blink open. Someone shakes a blue sheet into the wind. The garden is tiny, yet its bright leaves make the gray buildings seem less permanent.

3 By evening, shadows climb the brick walls, but the rooftop keeps its color. Maya closes the gate and looks over the railing. Far below, headlights stream through the streets like a moving river, quick and bright. Above her, the first star appears, faint beside the cranes and antennas. Tomorrow, she thinks, tomorrow. This time the phrase is not a promise that everything will change. It is a choice to return with another pitcher, another seed, and enough patience to let a small living thing claim its space.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What mood does the first paragraph create? Cite two details that create this mood.

2. How does the contrast between the garden and the city buildings develop the poem's meaning?

3. Why might the poet write SUNFLOWER in capital letters? Explain how this design choice affects the poem.

4. Choose one poetic technique from the poem and judge whether it effectively supports the poem's message. Name the technique, use a detail, and explain your judgment.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-line poem about caring for a small living thing in an ordinary place. Use either personification or a comparison and repeat a word or short phrase, then write two sentences that critique how those choices shape your poem's message.

ANSWER KEY # Garden Above Asphalt

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two comparisons or examples of personification, circle the repeated wording, and put a star beside one detail that shows a change in Maya's thinking. Use your marks to consider how the poem builds its meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What mood does the first paragraph create? Cite two details that create this mood.	**The mood is hot and difficult, but quietly hopeful. The roofs "shimmer like pans left on a stove" and the water vanishes into dry soil, while the tomato is a "red lantern refusing to go out."**
2	How does the contrast between the garden and the city buildings develop the poem's meaning?	**The small, bright garden contrasts with the gray, seemingly permanent buildings. This contrast suggests that living things and small acts of care can matter even in a harsh urban setting.**
3	Why might the poet write SUNFLOWER in capital letters? Explain how this design choice affects the poem.	**The capitals resemble a label on a pot and make the seed stand out visually. They emphasize Maya's deliberate act of planting and her hope for future growth.**
4	Choose one poetic technique from the poem and judge whether it effectively supports the poem's message. Name the technique, use a detail, and explain your judgment.	**Answers will vary. Example: Personification is effective when the buses "cough" and the windows "blink open" because it makes the city feel alive, showing that Maya's garden exists within an active, demanding place.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the windowsill, a seedling lifts its green hands.
I water, I water, while buses whisper below.
I turn its pot toward the morning light.
Tomorrow I will return with another careful cup.

The repeated words show that care is a steady action. Personification gives the seedling a reaching gesture, making its need for light feel important.

Accept supported interpretations of mood, contrast, visual design, and theme when students cite accurate details from the poem. For the critique and original poem, accept varied responses that correctly identify a technique and explain its effect. Check four intentional verse lines about actual care for a small living thing, comparison or personification, repeated wording, and two separate critique sentences explaining effects.