When Lights Leave

Analyze how poetic choices turn a blackout into a shared experience.

12.T.T.4 "Poetic Techniques: Evaluate and apply poetic techniques to enhance text's appeal to audiences or achieve specific purposes."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two comparisons or metaphors, circle each repeated opening, and number two examples of personification. Next to each mark, write a brief note about the effect it creates for the audience.

Harbor After Dark

1 At 2:17 a.m., the harbor lost its electricity. Store signs blinked out, and the boardwalk, usually lacquered with color, became a long black piano. From apartment windows, people leaned into the salt wind with flashlights cupped in their hands. The beams trembled across wet railings, searching, searching. Below, the tide kept time against the pilings, one soft knock after another. In the sudden dark, the town heard its own small machinery: a dog shaking rain from its coat, a buoy bell, the breath of waves moving through the inlet.

2 At dawn, the outage became a story before it became an inconvenience. Neighbors carried coffee to the curb and spoke to strangers they had passed for years without seeing. No screens called them indoors. No engines argued at the intersection. No neon moon hung above the diner. In that borrowed quiet, the harbor seemed less like property and more like a living witness, holding every window, roof, and narrow street in its blue-gray gaze. When power returned, refrigerators hummed, traffic lights resumed their orders, and the town exhaled, relieved, almost disappointed.

3 Later, students from the high school placed folding chairs on the darkened pier and read poems by phone light. Their voices did not conquer the water, nor did they explain the outage. They made room for it. Each line rose, vanished, and rose again, like a match briefly sheltering its flame from wind. Parents listened beside children; night-shift workers stood with their hands in their pockets. For an hour, the blackout was not merely a failure. It was a pause, a shared blank page, where a town accustomed to being lit could notice what its brightness had concealed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the repeated opening “No” in paragraph 2 shape the mood of the blackout?

2. What does the metaphor comparing the boardwalk to “a long black piano” add to the opening scene?

3. How does describing the harbor as “a living witness” affect the reader’s view of the place?

4. Evaluate the “shared blank page” metaphor in the final paragraph. How does it support the passage’s larger purpose?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 6 to 8 line poetic response for commuters who pass through a city park without noticing it. Persuade them to pause by using one comparison, one instance of personification, and a repeated phrase, then add one sentence naming the technique that is most effective and its effect.

When Lights Leave

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two comparisons or metaphors, circle each repeated opening, and number two examples of personification. Next to each mark, write a brief note about the effect it creates for the audience. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the repeated opening "No" in paragraph 2 shape the mood of the blackout?	**The repetition emphasizes what has fallen silent or disappeared, creating a calm, unusual quiet.**
2	What does the metaphor comparing the boardwalk to "a long black piano" add to the opening scene?	**It makes the dark boardwalk seem long, glossy, and connected to the rhythmic sounds of the harbor.**
3	How does describing the harbor as "a living witness" affect the reader's view of the place?	**It makes the harbor seem watchful and alive, so it feels like a shared presence rather than property.**
4	Evaluate the "shared blank page" metaphor in the final paragraph. How does it support the passage's larger purpose?	**It reframes the blackout as an opportunity for reflection and connection, helping readers see value in the pause instead of only failure.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before the train doors close, look up:
the park is a green lung
breathing cool shade over the pavement.
Look up, while sparrows stitch morning to the branches.
Look up, before the day folds you into its noise.
The benches keep their patient seats for you.

Repetition is most effective because it imitates an urgent invitation to pause.

Accept reasonable interpretations that connect a cited technique to a specific audience effect or purpose. For the original response, accept varied subjects and techniques if the writing addresses commuters, aims to persuade them to pause, and includes the required comparison, personification, repetition, and explanation. Display six intentional poetic lines and keep the single technique/effect explanation separate; the valid source prose-lyric and actual learner creation are preserved.