Beneath Still Water

Trace how an author's craft choices shape a narrator's changing view.

8.P.AC.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 Circle comparisons or objects given human actions, underline sentences that reveal the narrator's thoughts or feelings, and number the narrator's questions or decisions. Use your marks to notice how the author guides your response to the hidden road.

Road Beneath the Water

1 On the morning the town reservoir dropped low enough to show the old road, I walked past the warning signs and stopped at the chain-link fence. Below me, cracked asphalt curved through the mud like a black ribbon. A mailbox leaned beside the road, its red flag lifted as if it still expected a letter. I imagined families driving there years ago, unaware that water would swallow their street. My curiosity tugged harder than the wind at my jacket.

2 At home, I searched old maps and learned that the reservoir had been built in 1954, after repeated floods threatened nearby homes. The facts answered one question, but they made another grow: Who had chosen which places to save? I found a photograph of the lost neighborhood. Children stood on the same road, smiling beside bicycles. Their ordinary afternoon made the muddy scene below my fence feel less like a discovery and more like an absence.

3 The next day, I did not climb the fence or search for a way down. Instead, I brought the photograph to the town library and asked the archivist about the people in it. She showed me newspaper clippings, property records, and a list of families who moved before the valley filled. Leaving the library, I looked again toward the reservoir. It no longer seemed like a secret waiting for me to uncover. It felt like a story that required me to listen before I spoke.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What picture does the comparison of the road to a “black ribbon” create? How does that image shape the mood of the first paragraph?

2. Why does the author describe the mailbox as if it “still expected a letter”? What response does this personification invite from the reader?

3. The narrator asks, “Who had chosen which places to save?” How does this question change the focus after the facts about the reservoir?

4. How does the narrator’s decision to visit the library reveal a changed view of the reservoir? Use two details from the final paragraph.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence mini-scene about encountering a place with hidden history. Use one comparison, one question, and a final sentence that shows a decision. Then add one sentence explaining how one craft choice guides the reader's response.

ANSWER KEY

Beneath Still Water

GRADE 8 · 8.P.AC.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle comparisons or objects given human actions, underline sentences that reveal the narrator's thoughts or feelings, and number the narrator's questions or decisions. Use your marks to notice how the author guides your response to the hidden road. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What picture does the comparison of the road to a "black ribbon" create? How does that image shape the mood of the first paragraph?	**It creates an image of a dark, winding strip of road through mud. The image creates a mysterious, uneasy mood.**
2	Why does the author describe the mailbox as if it "still expected a letter"? What response does this personification invite from the reader?	**The personification suggests that ordinary life once continued on the road. It invites the reader to feel the loss of the former neighborhood.**
3	The narrator asks, "Who had chosen which places to save?" How does this question change the focus after the facts about the reservoir?	**It shifts the focus from factual information about flooding to the human decisions and possible unfairness behind building the reservoir.**
4	How does the narrator's decision to visit the library reveal a changed view of the reservoir? Use two details from the final paragraph.	**The narrator chooses to ask the archivist and study records instead of climbing the fence. The reservoir changes from a secret to uncover into a story that requires listening.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the edge of the closed train station, dust floated through the broken ticket window like tiny ghosts. Why had no one saved the faded posters on the wall? I imagined the empty building crowded with travelers from my grandfather's stories. I wanted to slip through the gate, but I chose to photograph the station and ask my grandfather about it instead.

The simile and question create mystery, while the final decision shows respect for the station's past.

Accept equivalent interpretations when students name a specific craft choice and connect it to a supported response, thought, decision, or question in the passage. For the writing task, check for all required sentence parts and a clear explanation of craft and reader response.