Grammar and Voice

Sort subject-verb agreement by how it is used.

11-12.L.1 "Demonstrate command of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. Consult references as needed. Apply the understanding that usage is a matter of convention, can change over time and within different contexts..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

STANDARD AGREEMENT

In edited English, a verb agrees with its subject. Writers usually follow this convention in formal writing.

Editorial: "Every lantern glows brightly."

NONSTANDARD VOICE

A writer may depart from standard subject-verb agreement to create a speaker's voice. In a creative work, that choice is not automatically a mistake.

Song lyric: "Those hills sings softly."

1 SORT

8 items

For Part 1, circle STANDARD or VOICE for each item; for Part 2, choose two items and explain how you knew where each belongs.

1. School announcement: "The library opens at eight." STANDARD VOICE

2. Travel article: "The ferries leave at dawn." STANDARD VOICE

3. Play dialogue: "My brother don't like storms." STANDARD VOICE

4. Science note: "The sample contains salt." STANDARD VOICE

5. News report: "The coaches were present." STANDARD VOICE

6. Novel dialogue: "We was ready by sunrise." STANDARD VOICE

7. Radio drama dialogue: "You was right all along." STANDARD VOICE

8. Instruction manual: "The device works offline." STANDARD VOICE

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

For Part 3, write one new sentence with standard subject-verb agreement in a formal context and one sentence that uses nonstandard agreement for a character's voice; name the context for each.

STANDARD _____

VOICE _____

CHALLENGE

Choose one VOICE item, rewrite it with standard subject-verb agreement, then explain in one sentence how the change affects the speaker's voice.

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PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	School announcement: “The library opens at eight.”	**STANDARD**	The singular subject library takes the singular verb opens.
2	Travel article: “The ferries leave at dawn.”	**STANDARD**	The plural subject ferries takes the plural verb leave.
3	Play dialogue: “My brother don't like storms.”	**VOICE**	Don't departs from standard agreement with the singular subject brother.
4	Science note: “The sample contains salt.”	**STANDARD**	The singular subject sample takes the singular verb contains.
5	News report: “The coaches were present.”	**STANDARD**	The plural subject coaches takes the plural verb were.
6	Novel dialogue: “We was ready by sunrise.”	**VOICE**	Was departs from standard agreement with we.
7	Radio drama dialogue: “You was right all along.”	**VOICE**	Was departs from standard agreement with you.
8	Instruction manual: “The device works offline.”	**STANDARD**	The singular subject device takes the singular verb works.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **STANDARD**: Report: “The engine runs quietly.”
- **VOICE**: Character dialogue: “My aunt don't drive at night.”

Challenge: My brother doesn't like storms. The revision suits formal writing but removes a feature of the character’s spoken voice.

For Part 2, look for explanations that identify the subject and verb and connect their agreement to the stated context. Accept varied Part 3 examples if their agreement and contexts fit the categories.