After the Water

How word choices shape a story of change

11-12.L.5 "Demonstrate understanding of semantics. Analyze figurative language in context and its role in the text. Analyze word relationships (morphology, etymology, linguistics) and their role in creating nuanced meaning..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two figurative descriptions, circle two pairs of words that describe the same subject differently, and box the prefix in reopen. Use your marks to track how the language shapes the library's story.

What the Water Left

1 On the morning the library reopened, I could still see the flood's fingerprints. A faint brown line crossed the brick near the entrance, and the bottom shelves had been replaced with metal ones. Six months earlier, the river had spilled into the reading room. Now children stepped around a stack of donated books while Ms. Vega, the librarian, checked each title for water damage. The town newsletter called the building repaired. My grandfather, who had spent Saturdays sanding its tables, called it restored. Both words described work done after the flood, but only one seemed to remember what the room had been.

2 Grandfather had also objected when a reporter called the volunteers stubborn. They had returned every weekend, even when the first shipment of shelves arrived in the wrong size. He preferred steadfast, a word that gave their persistence a purpose rather than making it sound like refusal to change. I watched him rub a stain on a table until the grain appeared again. Beside him, a teenager pasted fresh labels onto book spines. Neither worked as if the library were a monument. They were preparing a place where someone might find an answer tomorrow.

3 At noon, Ms. Vega unlocked the children's room. A girl reached for a novel and paused at the old waterline, still visible above the new shelves. “Why didn't you paint over it?” she asked. Ms. Vega said the town had voted to leave that narrow mark. Above the door, a paper sign read REOPEN. Its prefix promised a return, but the metal shelves and the waterline made that promise complicated: this was not the same room. When the girl opened her book, pages whispered against her sleeve, and the library sounded busy again.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does “the flood's fingerprints” suggest about the building? Use a detail from the passage in your answer.

2. How does steadfast present the volunteers differently from stubborn?

3. Why might Grandfather choose restored instead of repaired to describe the library?

4. What does the prefix in REOPEN suggest, and which two details complicate that suggestion?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence scene set somewhere other than a library after that place has changed. In the first two sentences, use one figurative phrase and two near-synonyms to describe the same thing; in the third, explain how the two words create different impressions.

ANSWER KEY

After the Water

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.L.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two figurative descriptions, circle two pairs of words that describe the same subject differently, and box the prefix in reopen. Use your marks to track how the language shapes the library's story. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does “the flood's fingerprints” suggest about the building? Use a detail from the passage in your answer.	**The phrase suggests that the flood left visible traces, such as the brown line across the brick.**
2	How does steadfast present the volunteers differently from stubborn?	**Steadfast presents their repeated work as purposeful commitment. Stubborn suggests an unwillingness to change.**
3	Why might Grandfather choose restored instead of repaired to describe the library?	**Restored suggests bringing back a valued place, while repaired focuses on fixing damage.**
4	What does the prefix in REOPEN suggest, and which two details complicate that suggestion?	**Re- suggests opening again, or returning to an earlier state. The new metal shelves and the visible waterline show that the room has changed.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After the last train left, the station held its breath beneath the clock. The platform felt quiet to the guard but silent to the passenger who had missed her ride. Quiet suggests rest, while silent makes the same lack of noise feel lonely.

For Part 1, accept “the flood's fingerprints” and “pages whispered” as figurative descriptions; repaired/restored and stubborn/steadfast are the word pairs. For Part 3, accept other near-synonyms if the explanation makes their different connotations clear.