What Remains Visible

Read a short story through its details, uncertainties, and choices.

11-12.RL.10.a "Demonstrate proficiency in reading and comprehending grade-appropriate texts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show Lena's attachment to the station, circle a detail that leaves her father's history uncertain, and number two choices Lena makes near the end. Use your marks to track what the story suggests without stating outright.

The Departure Board

1 On the morning the old train station became a market, Lena was hired to remove the departure board. Its brass letters had been pried out years ago, but faint shadows still named towns the trains no longer reached. A stallholder wanted the wall bare so he could hang a menu. Lena set her ladder beneath the board and opened her toolbox. Inside lay the flat screwdriver her father had used when he worked the night shift here. He had marked its wooden handle with a notch for each year on the job. Twelve notches, she counted, though she had never asked why he stopped.

2 The stallholder brought her coffee in a paper cup and asked if the board would come down before noon. “People need to see what we're selling,” he said, not unkindly. Lena loosened the first screw. Behind the board, someone had penciled a row of dates beside the names of towns. One date fell in the winter her father left home; another followed it by three weeks. She could not tell whether he had written them or merely passed this wall each night without noticing. Below her, the stallholder tested the lights above his counter, making the empty brass slots flash.

3 She put the screw back and climbed down. “It'll take longer,” she told him, pointing to the cracked plaster around the frame. The plaster was cracked, although she could have lifted the board without breaking it. The stallholder looked at the space he had reserved for his menu, then offered her a smaller sign to hang beside the board. Lena held it against the wall. From the entrance, the painted words announcing fresh bread covered the last line of vanished destinations. She shifted the sign until both could be read, then took out her pencil and wrote the two dates on her receipt.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What do the screwdriver and Lena's counting suggest about her connection to the station? Support your answer with a detail.

2. Why can Lena not be sure what the penciled dates reveal about her father?

3. How do the stallholder's words and actions make him more than an obstacle to Lena?

4. What does the narrator reveal about Lena's reason for saying the board will take longer to remove?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In about 80 to 110 words, explain whether Lena's final choice is an act of preservation, compromise, or both. Make a claim and analyze two details from the story, including one that complicates your claim.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.RL.10.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show Lena's attachment to the station, circle a detail that leaves her father's history uncertain, and number two choices Lena makes near the end. Use your marks to track what the story suggests without stating outright. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What do the screwdriver and Lena's counting suggest about her connection to the station? Support your answer with a detail.	**The station connects Lena to her father and his years of work there. She keeps his marked screwdriver and counts its twelve notches.**
2	Why can Lena not be sure what the penciled dates reveal about her father?	**A date falls in the winter he left home, but Lena does not know whether he wrote the dates or even noticed them.**
3	How do the stallholder's words and actions make him more than an obstacle to Lena?	**He needs space to show customers what he sells, but he brings Lena coffee and offers a smaller sign when she delays removing the board.**
4	What does the narrator reveal about Lena's reason for saying the board will take longer to remove?	**The plaster is cracked, but Lena could remove the board without breaking it. Her explanation also gives her a reason to delay.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Lena's final choice is both preservation and compromise. She saves the board from removal and moves the bread sign so the old destinations remain visible, but she does not refuse the market's new use of the station. The stallholder's wish for a menu is practical, and Lena accepts his smaller sign instead of demanding that the wall remain untouched. Her receipt also matters: she records the dates without claiming to know who wrote them or what they mean. The story suggests that keeping a trace of the past does not require turning uncertainty into a complete explanation.

Accept supported interpretations of Lena's motives, including uncertainty about what the dates mean. Do not treat her father as the confirmed writer of the dates.