Where Stories Gather

Trace how setting and structure shape a character's choice.

11-12.RL.3 "Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a text (e.g., context, setting, theme, plot events, structure, and character development)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that contrast the library with the grocery, circle Leena's decision about the story hour, and number the paragraphs in the order their events happen. Use your marks to trace how the author develops her choice.

The Blank Checkout Slip

1 At six, the library's windows went dark while the shops across the street filled with customers. A notice on the door said the branch would close for three months while workers repaired its leaking roof. Leena stood under the awning with a stack of returned books. Through the glass she could see the long table where neighbors had been recording stories about the block. Mr. Vale, the clerk, locked the door and offered her a blank checkout slip for a bookmark. She folded it into her pocket. Across the street, the grocery's back room glowed behind a curtain.

2 That morning, before the notice went up, Mr. Vale had shown Leena a folder of recordings from the storytelling table. "I can put every story online," he said. Leena pictured Mrs. Sato waiting for her turn to speak, then staying afterward to hear who remembered the old bakery. The recordings would keep her words, but they would not give anyone a reason to pull up a chair beside her. At the grocery, Leena asked the owner whether the back room could host a weekly story hour. He agreed, as long as they cleared the chairs before closing.

3 The next evening, rain tapped the grocery window as Leena set out six chairs in the back room. Mr. Vale arrived with a laptop and played Mrs. Sato's recording; when it ended, she pointed to a man near the door. "You knew the baker too," she said. He sat down and began with the morning the ovens failed. Leena wrote STORY HOUR on the blank checkout slip and propped it against a jar of pencils. Outside, the library windows were still dark. Inside, Mr. Vale closed his laptop so he could listen without the fan's hum.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the contrast between the dark library and the grocery's lit back room develop the story's idea about where a community can gather?

2. The author places the morning's events after the scene at the locked library. How does this order change your understanding of Leena's actions?

3. How does Leena's response to Mr. Vale's online proposal develop her character and move the plot forward?

4. Why might the author end with Mr. Vale closing his laptop, rather than with Mrs. Sato's recording?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Rewrite the final scene so Leena holds the story hour online instead of in the grocery's back room. In three sentences, show what happens to Leena and Mr. Vale; then, in two sentences, explain how your changed setting affects the story's idea about listening together.

ANSWER KEY

Where Stories Gather

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.RL.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that contrast the library with the grocery, circle Leena's decision about the story hour, and number the paragraphs in the order their events happen. Use your marks to trace how the author develops her choice. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the contrast between the dark library and the grocery's lit back room develop the story's idea about where a community can gather?	**The dark library represents the loss of the neighbors' usual meeting place. The lit back room offers a new place where they can share stories in person.**
2	The author places the morning's events after the scene at the locked library. How does this order change your understanding of Leena's actions?	**The opening shows Leena facing the closure before the flashback reveals that she has already asked to use the grocery. Readers then understand that she has begun finding a way for the story hour to continue.**
3	How does Leena's response to Mr. Vale's online proposal develop her character and move the plot forward?	**Leena values the conversations that happen around the recordings, not only preserving the stories. She moves from Mr. Vale's online proposal toward finding a place where neighbors can gather.**
4	Why might the author end with Mr. Vale closing his laptop, rather than with Mrs. Sato's recording?	**Closing the laptop shows Mr. Vale joining the listeners. The choice emphasizes the live exchange that follows the recording and connects his role to Leena's goal.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

From her kitchen, Leena opened the video call and watched three names appear on her screen. Mr. Vale played Mrs. Sato's recording, but the others stayed muted when it ended. Leena asked a question about the bakery, and one neighbor finally unmuted to answer. This ending would make the story less certain that people need a shared room to exchange memories. It would suggest that a digital meeting can connect neighbors, though distance may change how they listen.

Accept interpretations grounded in specific details and explaining how an author's choice affects character, plot, or theme. For Your Turn, look for three sentences of revised scene and two sentences analyzing the effect of the online setting.