The Bird Returns

Trace how one image changes across three Romantic-period stories

11-12.RL.9 "Analyze a variety of foundational works of American, British or World literature, two or more texts from the same period. Evaluate how an author draws on, alludes to..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each appearance of an albatross. Circle a choice a maker makes about a creation, then number two moments when a character can respond to danger.

A Bird Around the Neck

1 In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1798 poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, a sailor shoots an albatross that has followed his ship through icy seas. The ship later lies motionless in the heat, and his shipmates hang the dead bird around his neck. One by one they die, leaving him alone among their bodies. He cannot pray until he watches water snakes moving beneath the moon and blesses them without planning to. The bird falls from his neck, but his voyage does not end with that release. Back on land, he stops a wedding guest to tell what happened.

2 Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*, also written in the Romantic period, opens with explorer Robert Walton heading toward the North Pole. In a letter, he jokes that he will "kill no albatross" and asks his sister not to worry about his return. After his ship becomes trapped in ice, Walton meets Victor Frankenstein, who tells him how he brought a creature to life and fled at the sight of it. Victor recalls Coleridge's lines about a traveler afraid to look behind him. The creature, left to find his own way, learns to speak and asks Victor for companionship.

3 At the south dock, I unhooked the metal albatross from the charging rack. I had built it to listen for distress calls between islands. Last week I sent it out with a cracked microphone because the repair would delay our launch. Now it had returned with three words blinking on its screen: VOICE DETECTED, EAST. The captain said wind could make the same pattern and pointed to tomorrow's inspection. I lifted the bird onto my shoulder. Its broken speaker made no sound, but the screen kept flashing as our boat's engine started. I reached for the radio.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does Walton's joke about not killing an albatross sound less reassuring after he meets Victor?

2. Shelley has Victor recall Coleridge's frightened traveler after Victor flees his creature. How might that borrowed image affect a reader's judgment of Victor?

3. What changes when the bird carried by the narrator can still display a warning, unlike the bird carried by Coleridge's mariner?

4. How might the narrator's reach for the radio lead to a different outcome from Victor's first response to his creation? Use one detail about each maker.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one 80 to 100 word scene set outside a ship or laboratory. Transform the image of the bird carried as a burden and Victor's choice to flee a creation into a new dilemma. Show a decision and its consequence without naming either work.

ANSWER KEY

The Bird Returns

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.RL.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each appearance of an albatross. Circle a choice a maker makes about a creation, then number two moments when a character can respond to danger. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does Walton's joke about not killing an albatross sound less reassuring after he meets Victor?	**Walton treats the bird as a joke about danger, but his trapped ship and Victor's account suggest that a person can cause harm without killing a bird.**
2	Shelley has Victor recall Coleridge's frightened traveler after Victor flees his creature. How might that borrowed image affect a reader's judgment of Victor?	**Victor's fear may draw sympathy, but the image also invites readers to question why he runs from a being he chose to create.**
3	What changes when the bird carried by the narrator can still display a warning, unlike the bird carried by Coleridge's mariner?	**The dead bird marks an act the mariner cannot undo. The metal bird also points to danger the narrator may still be able to address.**
4	How might the narrator's reach for the radio lead to a different outcome from Victor's first response to his creation? Use one detail about each maker.	**Victor flees when his creature comes to life. Although the narrator sent out a damaged device, reaching for the radio suggests a chance to report its warning rather than turn away.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In the crowded train station, a dead sparrow swung from the string of my backpack. I had tied it there after the security robot I built drove it into the glass roof. That morning, the robot mistook a lost child for a trespasser and blocked every exit. I could have let the guards blame its broken camera. Instead, I climbed onto a bench and shouted the robot's override code. It turned toward my voice and released the gate. I carried the sparrow outside, then went back to tell the guards what I had done.

Accept supported interpretations that distinguish an allusion from a simple repeated detail. For Your Turn, look for a carried bird image, a maker's consequential choice, and an outcome in an 80 to 100 word scene.