# What Water Threatens

Trace how a narrator's view of a problem changes.

**11-12.W.3.a** "Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline details that establish the problem and why it matters, circle phrases that reveal two different points of view, and number three actions that move the events forward.

### The Basement Door

1 Water ran down the library stairwell in thin, muddy ribbons when I arrived to return a book before school. On the basement door, a handwritten sign read CLOSED, but through its window I could see the bottom shelf of our town's oral history collection. The cardboard boxes held transcripts of interviews with residents who remembered the mill before it closed. My grandmother's account was in one of them. I reached for the handle, imagining her words dissolving, just as Ms. Chen, the custodian, came up behind me with a flashlight.

2 "Don't open it," she said. "The lights downstairs are still on." I had noticed the water first as a threat to the interviews; she saw a possible electrical hazard. My friend Eli arrived carrying an empty plastic bin and offered to run downstairs for the boxes. Ms. Chen stopped him too. For a moment, I resented the delay. Then I saw the water glinting beneath a wall outlet inside the stairwell. I stepped back from the door and called the main office to report the flood and request help.

3 While we waited, Eli and I moved a table across the hallway so no one would approach the basement door. A maintenance worker arrived, shut off the basement circuit, and confirmed that we could enter. We carried the boxes to a dry room upstairs, where Ms. Chen warned us not to peel apart any wet pages. The lowest box was soaked, but the one bearing my grandmother's name was dry. I had wanted to save one voice. Watching Eli count the other boxes, I realized that the whole town had trusted us with its memories.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the opening make the water more than an ordinary leak to the narrator?

2. What does the narrator notice first, and what does Ms. Chen notice? Explain how their concerns differ.

3. What sight changes the narrator's response to Ms. Chen's warning, and what does the narrator do next?

4. How does the narrator's understanding of what is at stake change by the end?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph of 85 to 105 words about a new situation in which two people notice the same problem but judge its importance differently. Introduce a first-person narrator, make the stakes clear, and show three connected actions that lead to a shift in the narrator's view.

ANSWER KEY

# What Water Threatens

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.W.3.a

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that establish the problem and why it matters, circle phrases that reveal two different points of view, and number three actions that move the events forward. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How does the opening make the water more than an ordinary leak to the narrator? | **The water threatens interview transcripts, including the narrator's grandmother's account of the mill.** |
| 2 | What does the narrator notice first, and what does Ms. Chen notice? Explain how their concerns differ. | **The narrator notices that the interviews may be damaged. Ms. Chen notices that the lights are still on downstairs and worries about an electrical hazard.** |
| 3 | What sight changes the narrator's response to Ms. Chen's warning, and what does the narrator do next? | **The narrator sees water beneath a wall outlet, steps back, and calls the main office for help.** |
| 4 | How does the narrator's understanding of what is at stake change by the end? | **At first, the narrator focuses on saving the grandmother's account. By the end, the narrator recognizes that all the interviews preserve memories the town entrusted to the library.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The compost bin behind our cafeteria had tipped over, and orange peels covered the walkway just as the visiting debate team arrived. I wanted to hide the mess before anyone noticed. Mr. Ortiz, the cafeteria manager, pointed to a student with crutches approaching the door. He cared less about our school's reputation than about the slippery path. I waved the student toward the other entrance, then helped Mr. Ortiz scoop the peels into a bag. When we checked the bin, its broken latch explained the spill. By lunch, I cared more about fixing that latch than saving face.

For the markings, accept details that establish the flood's threat, phrases that distinguish concern for the interviews from concern for safety, and three actions in a logical sequence. For the original paragraph, check that the different viewpoints shape the actions and that the narrator's view changes.