When Darkness Moves

Read a scene closely, then shape a mood with your own language.

11-12.W.3.d "Use strong, effective word choice and figurative language."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three precise verbs and circle two figurative phrases that shape the stairwell's mood, then consider how those choices affect your sense of the place.

Five Flights Up

1. At 8:17, the apartment building went dark. The refrigerator clicked off, and the hallway's familiar hum vanished with it. I opened our door to find darkness pooled on the stairs, thick as spilled ink. From the fifth floor came a sharp knock, then Mrs. Alvarez calling that she was all right, just stuck without her flashlight. My phone lit a narrow strip of concrete. I picked up the grocery bag I had promised to bring Mrs. Alvarez and started toward her voice. Each step scraped under my shoe, louder than it ever sounded in daylight.

2. On the second landing, the stairwell window showed a square of rain-streaked sky. Wind pressed against the glass; somewhere below, the lobby door clapped shut. I gripped the rail and climbed, my phone beam stitching a thin path across the chipped steps. A neighbor's dog barked once behind a closed door, then fell silent. The bag's glass jars chimed against each other. I slowed down, not because the stairs were steep, but because every sound seemed to arrive before I could see its source. Mrs. Alvarez called again, closer now, and I answered.

3. At the fifth-floor landing, Mrs. Alvarez's door opened a crack. She took the bag and laughed at the jar lids rattling inside. Then the ceiling lights blinked on. Their steady glow swept the shadows into the corners, and the stairwell shrank back to ordinary size. I could see a damp umbrella beside her door and a strip of blue tape marking a loose tile. None of it had been dangerous, yet in the dark I had climbed as if the building might change beneath my feet. Mrs. Alvarez thanked me, and I took the stairs two at a time.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the comparison about darkness in paragraph 1 make the stairs seem difficult to cross?

2. How does the image of the phone beam in paragraph 2 show both how much the narrator can see and how the narrator moves?

3. Choose two sound-related words from paragraph 2. Explain how each shapes the mood.

4. How does the figurative description of the stairwell after the lights come on change its apparent size? What does this reveal about the narrator's fear?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 5- to 7-sentence scene about an ordinary place that feels different when the weather changes. Use at least two precise verbs and one original simile or metaphor to show the shift in mood; do not use a stairwell or a power outage.

When Darkness Moves

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three precise verbs and circle two figurative phrases that shape the stairwell's mood, then consider how those choices affect your sense of the place. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the comparison about darkness in paragraph 1 make the stairs seem difficult to cross?	**Comparing the darkness to spilled ink makes it seem thick enough to cover the steps and hide where to walk.**
2	How does the image of the phone beam in paragraph 2 show both how much the narrator can see and how the narrator moves?	**The beam is described as stitching a thin path, suggesting that it lights only a little at a time as the narrator advances carefully.**
3	Choose two sound-related words from paragraph 2. Explain how each shapes the mood.	**Clapped makes the lobby door's closing sound sudden and startling. Barked adds another abrupt noise, making the dark stairwell feel unsettled.**
4	How does the figurative description of the stairwell after the lights come on change its apparent size? What does this reveal about the narrator's fear?	**The stairwell seems to shrink back to ordinary size. This suggests that darkness and uncertainty had made the familiar space feel larger and more threatening.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before the rain, the empty basketball court glared under the noon sun. Sneakers squeaked across the painted lines while bicycles leaned against the fence. A cold gust shoved wrappers along the baseline, and the players hurried toward the gate. Rain drummed on the backboards until the whole court sounded like a tin roof. Water blurred the white lines, turning the familiar court into a shallow, wavering mirror. From beneath the picnic shelter, I watched one abandoned ball roll across the asphalt, with no one left to chase it.

Accept different marked words and phrases when students can explain how those choices shape the mood. For Part 3, look for a clear weather-driven shift, at least two precise verbs, and an original simile or metaphor.