The Bin Speaks

Trace how a narrator's voice shapes an ordinary scene.

11-12.W.3.e "Establish a clear, engaging voice."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two phrases that make the narrator sound playful, circle two phrases that show care, and mark the place where you first notice the voice shifting from playful to tender.

The Lost-and-Found Bin

1 At 3:47, the lost-and-found bin behind the school office looks like a thrift store after a small tornado. I am supposed to sort it for the winter donation drive, which sounds simple until I lift a single mitten from a pile of twelve. Where is its partner? Somewhere, a hand has been making its way through December alone. I set the mitten on the table, then pull out a water bottle with three stickers and no lid. This bin does not lose things quietly. It collects little arguments between people and the clock.

2 I used to roll my eyes at the names written inside jackets. Now I read them as instructions left for the future: Please send this back to me. A blue hoodie carries a name in block letters, crossed out and replaced by a second one. Maybe it was passed down; maybe someone bought it used. I do not know, and the bin will not tell me. I fold it anyway, sleeves tucked in, as if neatness could make a journey home more likely. The office clock clicks above me, impatient with my detective work.

3 By the time the late bus pulls up, I have made two piles: names I can read and mysteries I cannot. The named things go to the office counter. The rest wait in a cardboard box for the donation drive. I put the lone mitten on top, where somebody might spot it before it leaves. No dramatic reunion follows. The bell rings, the hallway fills, and students step around the box without looking down. Still, I leave its flaps open. A lost thing needs at least one person willing to notice it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Choose two phrases from the first paragraph that give the narrator a playful voice. How does each phrase do that?

2. How does the narrator's description of the names inside jackets show a change in attitude?

3. Which sentence in the second paragraph shows that the narrator will not pretend to know the hoodie's story? How does that choice affect the voice?

4. How does the narrator's voice shift from the opening to the final two sentences? Use a detail from each place.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one first-person paragraph of 90 to 110 words about an ordinary place or routine you know. Establish a distinctive voice with a concrete sensory detail and a surprising comparison, then let your attitude shift by the end.

ANSWER KEY

The Bin Speaks

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.W.3.e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two phrases that make the narrator sound playful, circle two phrases that show care, and mark the place where you first notice the voice shifting from playful to tender. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Choose two phrases from the first paragraph that give the narrator a playful voice. How does each phrase do that?	**"A thrift store after a small tornado" makes the mess sound comically dramatic. "Little arguments between people and the clock" playfully treats lost objects as evidence of rushed mornings.**
2	How does the narrator's description of the names inside jackets show a change in attitude?	**The narrator once rolled their eyes at the names but now reads them as requests to return the clothing, showing more concern for its owners.**
3	Which sentence in the second paragraph shows that the narrator will not pretend to know the hoodie's story? How does that choice affect the voice?	**"I do not know, and the bin will not tell me." The admission makes the curious narrator sound honest rather than overly certain.**
4	How does the narrator's voice shift from the opening to the final two sentences? Use a detail from each place.	**The opening jokes that the bin looks like a thrift store after a tornado. At the end, leaving the box open shows quiet concern for the lost items and their owners.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At our sink, the plates arrive in a greasy parade just when I want to sit down. The tap coughs cold water before it warms, and the sponge smells faintly of lemon. I used to stack everything in one wobbling tower and attack it like an enemy fortress. Tonight I wash my grandmother's chipped cup first. She always leaves a ring of tea at the bottom, even when she swears she has finished it. I turn the cup slowly under the water so the chip does not catch my thumb. The rest of the dishes can wait thirty seconds.

Accept different supported marking choices and interpretations of where the voice begins to shift. For Part 3, look for a consistent first-person perspective, a distinctive voice, both required details, and a discernible change in attitude within 90 to 110 words.