When Plans Blur

Trace how an obstacle reshapes a narrator's story

11-12.W.3 "Write narratives or other creative texts (e.g., poetry, digital composition, graphic stories, memoirs) to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique and established voice, well-chosen details..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what the narrator plans to do, circle the obstacle, and number three moments that lead from the prepared speech to the story told aloud.

The Speech

1 At 6:58, the cafeteria smelled of wet coats and burnt coffee. Mr. Alvarez stood beside the cake while I gripped my three-page handwritten speech, the one I had written for his retirement. It listed twenty-seven years of repaired locks, shoveled steps, and lights switched on before anyone else arrived. I wanted the teachers to hear every number. I wanted him to know we had counted. A thin drop struck the paper. Then another. Above my seat, the ceiling tile darkened, and a brown stain traveled across the first paragraph like a slow verdict.

2 I slid the pages beneath my chair, but water followed the fold. By the time the principal called my name, the ink had become a blue fog. I could have apologized and sat down. Instead, I remembered a January afternoon when I had stayed late after failing an audition. Mr. Alvarez was sweeping the hallway. He never asked why I was crying. He only pushed the broom aside and said, "The building isn't closing yet." I walked to the microphone without my speech. My hands were empty, which made them impossible to hide.

3 I told the room about the broom, the hallway, and the extra hour he gave me without naming it a gift. The principal lowered her program. Mr. Alvarez stared at the floor, then laughed once, softly, as if a door had opened where he expected a wall. I forgot the dates and the list of locks. When I finished, nobody clapped at first; the pause felt less like silence than room for him to answer. He lifted his paper cup. "I remember that day," he said. Behind me, a drop struck the abandoned speech, then another.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the opening establish both the narrator's goal and why it matters?

2. Which event changes the narrator's plan, and how does the sequence of actions make that change believable?

3. What does the image of ink becoming "a blue fog" add to the narrator's voice and the scene?

4. How does the final drop of water give the scene a conclusion without stating its lesson?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one first-person scene of 80 to 110 words in which an unexpected obstacle changes your narrator's plan. Establish why the plan matters, include a sensory detail, and end with an image that reflects the change.

When Plans Blur

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what the narrator plans to do, circle the obstacle, and number three moments that lead from the prepared speech to the story told aloud. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the opening establish both the narrator's goal and why it matters?	**The narrator plans to read a speech listing Mr. Alvarez's years of work because they want him to know his work has been noticed.**
2	Which event changes the narrator's plan, and how does the sequence of actions make that change believable?	**Water ruins the handwritten speech. The narrator tries to protect it, recalls an afternoon with Mr. Alvarez, and then speaks about that memory instead.**
3	What does the image of ink becoming "a blue fog" add to the narrator's voice and the scene?	**It makes the ruined words vivid while suggesting the narrator's prepared plan is no longer clear or usable.**
4	How does the final drop of water give the scene a conclusion without stating its lesson?	**It returns to the leak from the opening, but the speech is now abandoned because the narrator has found a more personal way to speak.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I planned to photograph the last train leaving our station before the platform closed for repairs. At dusk, I balanced my phone against the cold railing and waited for its yellow windows to appear. Then the screen went black: my battery had died. I stared at the empty tracks, furious that I had lost my chance. When the train arrived, I put the phone away and called to my sister, who was already walking toward the exit. She came back in time to see the conductor wave. After the train vanished, my sister still held her hand up in the dark.

Accept interpretations supported by specific details from the passage. For the writing task, look for a clear initial plan, an obstacle that causes a different action, and a final image connected to that change.