Voices in the Dark

Trace how word choices change the mood of a story.

6.RL.4 "Interpret words and phrases as they are used as intended by the author of a text. Determine the meaning of words and phrases, including figurative and connotative language. Analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two phrases that mean more than their literal words, then circle one word near the beginning and one near the end that help you feel how the mood changes.

The Story Without a Book

1 The lights blinked out just as I opened the book. Rain tapped the library windows, then drummed so hard it drowned the little kids' questions. In the dark, the shelves became tall, silent strangers. My brother Mateo grabbed my sleeve. I had promised to read to him while Mom worked at the front desk, but the words on the page had vanished. Someone whispered, "Is the storm coming in?" I opened my mouth, and fear tied my tongue in a knot.

2 A flashlight clicked on behind the desk. Mom held it beneath her chin, and her face looked like a floating moon. "The storm is outside," she said. "We're safe in here." She handed me the light, then went to check on the other children. Mateo was still clutching my sleeve. I couldn't see the book well enough to read, so I told him the story from memory. At first, my voice was a thin thread that nearly broke whenever thunder rolled.

3 Mateo leaned closer. I remembered the fox in the story, lost in a forest, and gave him a squeaky voice. A laugh popped out of Mateo, then another child. Soon I aimed the flashlight at the ceiling as we took turns inventing what the fox might find. Outside, the rain still battered the glass, but inside, our voices wove a warm blanket around us. When the lights finally returned, nobody rushed for the books. Mateo asked, "Can we keep going?"

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the narrator mean when the shelves become "tall, silent strangers"? How does that phrase make the library feel?

2. The rain first "tapped" the windows, then "drummed." What change do these verbs help you hear?

3. What does "my voice was a thin thread that nearly broke" show about the narrator at first?

4. What does "our voices wove a warm blanket around us" mean? How does it change the feeling of the ending?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences about stepping into the same empty classroom: make the first feel threatening and the second feel welcoming. In a third sentence, name one word from each sentence and explain how those words create different feelings.

ANSWER KEY # Voices in the Dark

GRADE 6 · 6.RL.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two phrases that mean more than their literal words, then circle one word near the beginning and one near the end that help you feel how the mood changes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the narrator mean when the shelves become "tall, silent strangers"? How does that phrase make the library feel?	**The shelves seem unfamiliar and frightening in the dark. The phrase makes the library feel eerie.**
2	The rain first "tapped" the windows, then "drummed." What change do these verbs help you hear?	**The rain changes from a light sound to a louder, more forceful one.**
3	What does "my voice was a thin thread that nearly broke" show about the narrator at first?	**The narrator is nervous, and their voice is quiet and unsteady.**
4	What does "our voices wove a warm blanket around us" mean? How does it change the feeling of the ending?	**The children feel comforted by sharing the story. The phrase gives the ending a safe, cozy feeling even though the storm continues.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I stepped into the empty classroom, where the buzzing lights glared at me. I stepped into the empty classroom, where warm sunlight welcomed me. "Glared" makes the room feel threatening, while "welcomed" makes it feel friendly.

Accept reasonable interpretations supported by the passage. For Part 3, look for two distinct tones created by specific word choices and an explanation of their effects.