When Words Shift

Trace how word choices change a story's mood.

7.RL.4.a "Determine the meaning of words and phrases including how figurative and connotative meanings affect tone and mood."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two phrases that make the scene feel unsettling and circle two phrases that make it feel safer, so you can track the change in mood.

The Greenhouse After Dark

1 By the time Nia reached the school greenhouse, the last bus had sighed away. A storm had cut the power, and the seedlings her class had planted were inside. Without the heaters, the cold night might ruin them. She pushed the door; its hinges complained into the dark. Rain tapped the glass roof, first softly, then like impatient fingers. Nia held her flashlight still. Between the long tables, every watering can seemed to watch her. She had come to carry the trays to the warm library, but her feet would not move.

2 Something scraped behind the potting bench. Nia's light jumped across the floor and found a muddy trail. A shape hunched beside the seed trays, and her stomach tightened. Then the shape sneezed. It was Mr. Vale, the custodian, wearing his old raincoat and dragging a cart. 'I thought these little plants deserved a ride,' he said. Nia laughed, though her hands still shook. Together they loaded the trays, careful not to spill the wet soil. Outside, the wind rattled the door, but now it sounded less like a warning than a drumbeat.

3 The library windows glowed across the courtyard. Nia and Mr. Vale hurried through the rain, pushing the cart over bumps in the path. Inside, the librarian had cleared a place near a radiator. Warm air met Nia's face, and she set down the last tray. One seedling leaned sideways, its thin stem bent by the ride. Nia pressed a little soil around its roots until it stood upright. 'There,' Mr. Vale said. Beyond the window, rain still blurred the schoolyard, but the row of green leaves looked bright enough to hold its own morning.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does it mean that the door's hinges "complained into the dark"? How does this phrase affect the mood when Nia enters?

2. What does the word "impatient" suggest about the sound of the rain? How would the mood change if the rain sounded "steady" instead?

3. Why does the wind sound "less like a warning than a drumbeat" after Nia finds Mr. Vale? How does this change the mood?

4. What does the phrase "bright enough to hold its own morning" suggest about the seedlings? What tone does it create at the end?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences about the same empty school hallway after everyone leaves. Use figurative or strongly suggestive words to make it feel uneasy in the first sentence and welcoming in the second, then underline the words that create each mood.

ANSWER KEY

When Words Shift

GRADE 7 · 7.RL.4.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two phrases that make the scene feel unsettling and circle two phrases that make it feel safer, so you can track the change in mood. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does it mean that the door's hinges "complained into the dark"? How does this phrase affect the mood when Nia enters?	**The hinges creak. Describing the sound as a complaint makes Nia's entrance feel eerie.**
2	What does the word "impatient" suggest about the sound of the rain? How would the mood change if the rain sounded "steady" instead?	**"Impatient" makes the tapping seem urgent and unsettling. "Steady" would make it seem calmer.**
3	Why does the wind sound "less like a warning than a drumbeat" after Nia finds Mr. Vale? How does this change the mood?	**Nia has help, so the wind no longer seems threatening. The drumbeat comparison makes the mood feel more energetic and determined.**
4	What does the phrase "bright enough to hold its own morning" suggest about the seedlings? What tone does it create at the end?	**The seedlings seem able to survive despite the storm. The phrase creates a hopeful tone.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After the final bell, the empty hallway swallowed my footsteps, and the lockers glared from both sides. The same hallway welcomed me with a gentle stripe of golden light beneath the classroom doors.

Accept interpretations supported by the passage's word choices. For Part 3, look for two sentences about the same empty hallway with underlined language that creates contrasting moods.