When Lights Blinked

Trace how a narrator builds and resolves a scene.

7.W.3 "Write narratives and other creative texts (e.g. poetry, graphic stories, digital composition, memoirs) to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline phrases that shift time, circle two sensory details, and number three performance events in the order they occur to trace how the scene unfolds.

The Note in the Dark

1 At six o'clock, the school gym smelled of floor polish and wet coats. I stood behind the curtain with a metal triangle in one hand and its striker in the other. Our band was about to play for the winter fair, and my friend Lila kept tapping her foot against the wooden riser. "You'll come in after my drumbeat," she whispered. I nodded, though the triangle felt slippery in my palm. Beyond the curtain, chairs scraped and families settled in. Then the lights blinked once, and the gym fell dark.

2 For a breath, nobody moved. Then someone near the doors laughed nervously, and a younger child began to cry. Earlier that day, our music teacher had made us practice without looking at our sheets. I had complained that we would never need to memorize such an easy part. Now, in the dark, Lila tapped the opening rhythm on the edge of her drum: thump, thump, pause, thump. "We know this," she said. I counted four beats under my breath and struck the triangle. Its bright note cut through the murmuring.

3 Across the gym, Mr. Chen lifted his phone light, but he did not stop us. One by one, the clarinets found the melody, and the audience began clapping along. As the final note faded, the ceiling lights flickered back on. I looked at Lila; she raised one eyebrow as if to say, See? Afterward, while we packed our instruments, I slipped the triangle into its case with steady hands. The darkness had not ruined our performance. It had taught me that listening could hold a band together when the page disappeared.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do two details in the opening establish the setting and show how the narrator feels?

2. What time shift begins with "Earlier that day," and why does the narrator include it before returning to the dark gym?

3. How do Lila's words and drum rhythm help the next event unfold?

4. How does the final reflection grow out of what happened during the performance?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a first-person scene of six to eight sentences in which a small problem interrupts an event. Establish the setting, shift briefly to an earlier moment and back, include dialogue and a sensory detail, and end with a reflection that follows from what happened.

ANSWER KEY

When Lights Blinked

GRADE 7 · 7.W.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline phrases that shift time, circle two sensory details, and number three performance events in the order they occur to trace how the scene unfolds. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do two details in the opening establish the setting and show how the narrator feels?	**The smell of floor polish and wet coats places the scene in a crowded gym. The triangle feeling slippery in the narrator's hand suggests nervousness.**
2	What time shift begins with "Earlier that day," and why does the narrator include it before returning to the dark gym?	**The story shifts back to rehearsal, when the band practiced without music sheets. This explains how they can play in the dark.**
3	How do Lila's words and drum rhythm help the next event unfold?	**Her words reassure the narrator, and her rhythm gives the narrator a cue to count the beats and strike the triangle.**
4	How does the final reflection grow out of what happened during the performance?	**The band keeps playing by listening to one another instead of reading their music. The narrator realizes that listening helped hold them together.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the Saturday market, I balanced a tower of peaches while our stall's awning snapped in the wind. "Hold the pole!" Dad called as a gust shoved the canvas sideways. Earlier that morning, he had shown me how to tighten the rope, but I had barely listened. Now I grabbed the loose end, pulled it through the metal loop, and tied the knot he had demonstrated. The awning stopped flapping, and the peaches stayed put. Dad grinned as rain began to patter against the canvas. I decided that paying attention was its own kind of preparation.

Accept different sensory details and reasonable interpretations of the narrator's feelings when supported by the passage. For the scene, look for a clear time shift, a logical event sequence, and a reflection connected to the outcome.