The Greenhouse Click

Trace how word choices change the mood of a scene.

8.RL.4.b "Analyze how specific word choices, shape meaning, mood, and tone."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle three words or phrases that make the greenhouse feel threatening, and underline three that make the scene feel hopeful. Number the three mentions of the loose pane to track how its sound changes meaning.

Before the Freeze

1 The greenhouse crouched behind the school, its glass panes filmed with dust. Mara had promised to collect the class's forgotten seed trays before the weekend freeze. Now the late bus was gone, and the path lay empty. A loose pane tapped against its frame, sharp as a fingernail on a desk. Inside, shadows crowded the narrow aisles. Mara pulled the door open. It scraped across the floor, and the cold air seemed to follow her in, hunting for whatever still grew there.

2 She found the trays beneath a bench, where the soil looked black and bare. Then she noticed a thread of green lifting from one corner. Another curved beside it, small but stubborn. Mara knelt and touched the edge of the tray, careful not to bruise the shoots. Above her, the loose pane clicked again. It no longer sounded like a warning. It sounded like a clock, reminding her that the seedlings were alive and still needed help.

3 Mara slid the trays into a cardboard box and wrapped her scarf around them. The greenhouse door gave its usual scrape as she stepped outside, but now the sound seemed to announce her exit. Beyond the fence, a porch light glowed beside the street. She pictured the tiny shoots on a classroom windowsill, leaning toward the morning sun. The wind still bit her cheeks. She held the box closer and walked toward the light, while the loose pane kept clicking behind her.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do “crouched” and “crowded” shape the mood in the first paragraph?

2. What does “small but stubborn” suggest about the shoots, and how does it change the mood?

3. Why does the pane’s click seem like “a warning” at first but later like “a clock”? Use details from the passage.

4. In the last paragraph, how do “bit” and “glowed” create contrasting feelings?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence scene in which the same sound first feels unsettling, then reassuring. Describe the sound differently each time, and use the third sentence to explain how your word choices change the mood.

ANSWER KEY

The Greenhouse Click

GRADE 8 · 8.RL.4.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle three words or phrases that make the greenhouse feel threatening, and underline three that make the scene feel hopeful. Number the three mentions of the loose pane to track how its sound changes meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do "crouched" and "crowded" shape the mood in the first paragraph?	**"Crouched" makes the greenhouse seem ready to spring at Mara, while "crowded" makes the aisles feel cramped. Both create an uneasy mood.**
2	What does "small but stubborn" suggest about the shoots, and how does it change the mood?	**The shoots are fragile but determined to keep growing. The phrase shifts the mood from bleak to hopeful.**
3	Why does the pane's click seem like "a warning" at first but later like "a clock"? Use details from the passage.	**At first, Mara is alone in a dark greenhouse, so the click seems threatening. After she finds living seedlings, it reminds her that they need help soon.**
4	In the last paragraph, how do "bit" and "glowed" create contrasting feelings?	**"Bit" keeps the cold feeling harsh, while "glowed" makes the light seem warm and welcoming. The contrast leaves both danger and hope in the scene.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The radiator's clank made me freeze in the empty hallway while I waited for my dad. When he called my name from the doorway, its steady tapping sounded like a familiar beat. "Clank" makes the wait uneasy, while "steady tapping" makes the hallway feel safe.

Accept other interpretations when students connect specific words to a supported change in mood or tone. For Part 3, look for two descriptions of one sound and an explanation of their different effects.