Curtain Call

Notice how word choice brings a scene to life.

8.W.3.d "Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory and figurative language to capture the action and convey experiences and events."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two precise action verbs, circle two sensory details, and write 1 beside a comparison that helps you picture the scene.

Five Minutes to Curtain

1 With five minutes until the school play, Mara tugged the curtain rope. The red velvet shuddered but stayed shut. Somewhere above her, a pulley clicked, then fell silent. From the stage came the dry scrape of shoes as the cast took their places. Mara pulled again. The rope rasped across her palms, and a hot stripe of pain followed. On the other side of the curtain, the audience quieted. Their whispers faded one by one, like rain tapping to a stop.

2 Mara crouched and found the rope's loose end pinned beneath a scenery flat. The painted wooden frame held it tight against the floor. “Lift that corner,” she whispered to Imani. Imani heaved, and the flat rose an inch. Splinters pricked Mara's fingertips as she reached under the frame and flicked the rope free. A cough burst from the audience. Behind the curtain, an actor's paper crown rustled as he paced. Mara could hear each small sound now, even the creak of Imani's shoes beside her.

3 Mara pulled the freed rope in two quick strokes. The curtain slid apart, its hem whispering over the boards. Stage light spilled across the actors' faces like sunlight through a sudden break in clouds. The boy in the paper crown froze for half a beat, then stepped forward and spoke his first line. Mara eased the rope into its cleat, careful not to let the curtain swing back. Her palms still stung, but the knot in her stomach loosened as the audience laughed at exactly the right moment.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what does “shuddered” show about the curtain that “moved” would not?

2. What do “splinters pricked Mara's fingertips” and “the creak of Imani's shoes” help you sense in paragraph 2?

3. What does the comparison “like sunlight through a sudden break in clouds” help you picture when the curtain opens?

4. How does “the knot in her stomach loosened” convey Mara's feeling at the end?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence scene about a small problem during a school event other than a play. Show how someone responds using at least two precise action verbs, sensory details from two different senses, and one original comparison that conveys a feeling or action.

ANSWER KEY

Curtain Call

GRADE 8 · 8.W.3.d

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two precise action verbs, circle two sensory details, and write 1 beside a comparison that helps you picture the scene. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does “shuddered” show about the curtain that “moved” would not?	**It shows that the curtain shook slightly but did not open.**
2	What do “splinters pricked Mara's fingertips” and “the creak of Imani's shoes” help you sense in paragraph 2?	**The splinters convey what Mara feels. The creak lets the reader hear a small sound that Mara notices while waiting to open the curtain.**
3	What does the comparison “like sunlight through a sudden break in clouds” help you picture when the curtain opens?	**It helps the reader picture bright stage light suddenly spreading across the actors.**
4	How does “the knot in her stomach loosened” convey Mara's feeling at the end?	**It conveys relief by suggesting that her tense feeling eases when the play begins.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the science fair, our cardboard bridge sagged beneath the last metal washer. A sharp crack snapped through the room, and one support folded like a tired knee. I caught the washers before they scattered across the table. Glue stuck to my fingertips as I pressed a spare strip of cardboard against the weak spot. My partner slid fresh tape around the joint, and the bridge held when we tried again. I exhaled, tasting the sour lemonade I had gulped before our turn.

For the marking task, accept any two precise action verbs, two details that evoke the senses, and one figurative comparison from the passage. For the scene, check that every required technique helps convey the action or experience.