Storm Behind the Curtain

Trace how a narrator turns a problem into a story.

8.W.3 "Write narratives and other creative texts (e.g., poetry, digital composition, graphic stories, 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 two phrases that shift the story between time frames, circle the dialogue that proposes a new plan, and number three actions that move the problem toward its solution.

Making Thunder

1. Twenty minutes before the curtain rose, our school auditorium smelled of dusty velvet and fresh paint. I stood behind the set's cardboard window, ready to cue the recorded thunder. Then the speakers gave a sharp pop and fell silent. Onstage, Leila held her paper umbrella and stared at me through the window. "The storm is the whole reason my character leaves," she whispered. I pressed play again. Nothing. From the audience, I could hear chairs scraping as families settled into their seats.

2. The afternoon before, Leila and I had laughed when a prop cart rattled across the hallway tiles; it sounded like distant thunder. Back in the auditorium, that memory flashed through me. I grabbed the cart, but rolling it onstage would spoil the scene. "What if we make the storm from back here?" I asked. Leila tapped her fingernails against the wooden window frame. I rolled the cart slowly across the backstage floor. Its wheels rumbled beneath her quick patter, while I rubbed stiff paper until it hissed like rain.

3. At the opening cue, I pushed the cart hard. The wheels roared, then faded as I pulled it away. Leila paused at the window, listening, before she stepped into the painted street. No one laughed. After the final bow, she found me beside the cart. "Your thunder sounded angrier than the recording," she said, smiling. I looked at the scuffed wheels and the paper creased in my hands. Until that night, I had thought a good stage manager made problems disappear. Now I knew we could turn one into part of the story.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the opening establish who is telling the story, where it happens, and why the problem is urgent?

2. How do the narrator's question and Leila's next action show their plan taking shape?

3. Which two phrases move the story into the earlier memory and then back to the problem? How do they help the sequence make sense?

4. How does the final reflection change the narrator's idea of what a good stage manager does? Use one detail from the ending.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a first-person scene of 6 to 8 sentences about a different last-minute problem that you and another person solve together. Establish the setting, include a line of dialogue, a phrase that shifts to an earlier time, two sensory details, and an ending that reflects on what happened.

ANSWER KEY

Storm Behind the Curtain

GRADE 8 · 8.W.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two phrases that shift the story between time frames, circle the dialogue that proposes a new plan, and number three actions that move the problem toward its solution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the opening establish who is telling the story, where it happens, and why the problem is urgent?	**The stage manager tells the story in first person from the school auditorium. The speakers fail twenty minutes before the play, and the storm sound is needed for Leila's character to leave.**
2	How do the narrator's question and Leila's next action show their plan taking shape?	**The narrator suggests making the storm backstage, and Leila taps the window frame to create a rain sound. Their actions show them building the effect together.**
3	Which two phrases move the story into the earlier memory and then back to the problem? How do they help the sequence make sense?	**"The afternoon before" introduces the memory of the cart's sound. "Back in the auditorium" returns to the broken-speaker problem and shows why the narrator grabs the cart.**
4	How does the final reflection change the narrator's idea of what a good stage manager does? Use one detail from the ending.	**The narrator first thinks a good stage manager makes problems disappear but realizes a problem can become part of the story. Leila's comment that the new thunder sounded angrier shows the improvised effect worked.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

An hour before the neighborhood talent show, I waited in the gym with my guitar and a knot in my stomach. When I opened the case, one string hung loose. The week before, Dad had shown me how to play the melody on just three strings. "I'll keep the beat," whispered Nia, lifting her drum. As the lights dimmed, I remembered his lesson and changed my chords. Nia's steady thump filled the gaps where bright notes should have been. Afterward, the crowd clapped, and my fingers stopped shaking. I had feared a loose string would ruin our song, but it made us listen harder to each other.

Accept other accurate details from the passage when students explain how the narrator's choices shape the sequence and ending. In Part 3, look for a clear problem-to-solution sequence and a reflection that follows from the events.