Light in the Hallway

Trace a change in mood through word choice and figurative language.

9-10.RL.4 "Analyze the impact of specific word choices and figurative language on meaning, mood, and tone (e.g., connotation, dialect, how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two expressions that make the dark feel threatening, and circle two that make the neighbors feel connected. Number your four marks in reading order to track the change in mood.

When the Lights Went Out

1 At nine o'clock, the power in the apartment building vanished between one blink and the next. The hallway bulbs died, and the elevator gave a small, offended cough before it stopped. Mara stood outside her door with a bag of groceries, listening as the dark swallowed the far end of the corridor. Somewhere below, a child called for his mother. The sound of a key scraping against a lock seemed loud enough to wake the whole block. Mara held her phone out like a tiny shield, but its pale square barely reached the stairwell.

2 On the third-floor landing, Mr. Ortiz stood beside the stopped elevator, holding a sack of tangerines. "You got a light?" he asked. Mara pointed her phone toward the steps, and he lifted his own, doubling the glow. From upstairs came the click of a door, then another. A woman in slippers appeared with a battery lantern and said, "Well, look at us, a parade." The lantern threw their shadows across the walls, long and crooked. Yet her joke loosened the silence, and Mara noticed that the child downstairs had stopped calling.

3 Together they took the stairs, calling out each floor before anyone missed a step. At the lobby door, a neighbor passed the child a tangerine from Mr. Ortiz's sack. He peeled it slowly, and its bright smell threaded through the stale air. Outside, the streetlights were out too, but windows across the block began to bloom with candlelight. Mara could not see the end of the street. Still, voices traveled from stoop to stoop, stitching the dark into something they could cross. She set her groceries down and held the door open for the next person.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does “swallowed” suggest about the dark in the first paragraph, and how does it affect the mood?

2. Why does Mara hold her phone “like a tiny shield”? Explain what the comparison suggests about how she feels.

3. How does the woman’s phrase “Well, look at us, a parade” change the tone on the landing?

4. Near the end, voices are “stitching the dark into something they could cross.” How does this image change the meaning of the dark compared with the first paragraph?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence scene set at a bus stop in the rain. Make the first two sentences feel uneasy, then shift to a hopeful mood; include an original comparison, and use your final sentence to explain how one word choice creates the shift.

ANSWER KEY # Light in the Hallway

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two expressions that make the dark feel threatening, and circle two that make the neighbors feel connected. Number your four marks in reading order to 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 "swallowed" suggest about the dark in the first paragraph, and how does it affect the mood?	**"Swallowed" makes the dark seem powerful and consuming, creating a threatening mood.**
2	Why does Mara hold her phone "like a tiny shield"? Explain what the comparison suggests about how she feels.	**A shield offers protection, but "tiny" suggests the phone's light offers little. Mara feels vulnerable.**
3	How does the woman's phrase "Well, look at us, a parade" change the tone on the landing?	**Her casual joke makes their small group sound cheerful rather than frightened, shifting the tone toward warmth.**
4	Near the end, voices are "stitching the dark into something they could cross." How does this image change the meaning of the dark compared with the first paragraph?	**At first, the dark seems to swallow the corridor. The image of stitching suggests the neighbors' voices bring people together and make the dark feel manageable.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Rain rattled the bus shelter roof like a jar full of nails. Across the empty road, the dark windows stared back at me. Then a stranger stepped under the roof and offered me the dry half of her newspaper. We laughed when the bus finally rolled up, its windows glowing warm gold. The word "glowing" changes the mood by making the arriving bus feel welcoming instead of strange.

Accept other text-supported interpretations of mood and tone. For Part 3, look for five sentences, an uneasy-to-hopeful shift, an original comparison, and an explanation of one word choice.