The Wrong Clock

How a narrator's experiences shape a festival story

9-10.RL.6 "Assess how point of view and/or author purpose shapes the content and style of culturally diverse texts, including those from outside the United States. Reflect on how personal experiences impact interpretations of a text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details shaped by the narrator's point of view, circle a phrase that shows what another character values, and write 1 and 2 beside the narrator's early and later interpretations of the kolam.

A Pattern for Today

1 At five in the morning, Chennai was still dark, but Paati had already set a steel bowl of rice flour beside our door. It was Pongal, and she wanted me to draw a kolam, the looping pattern our family makes on the ground for the festival. I had a robotics match across town and a bus to catch. My fingers knew how to wire a motor, not how to guide white flour into a clean curve. Paati knelt without a word. I watched the first line spill from her hand, steady as a thread from a spool.

2 Across the lane, Mr. Ravi lifted his bicycle over the wet pavement. "Another one?" he asked, smiling at the growing pattern. "The rain will erase it by lunch." I almost agreed. At school, every project was built to last long enough for judges to inspect it. But Paati said, "The entrance is ready for whoever comes today." She showed me how to pinch the flour, and I made a crooked loop beside hers. An ant found a grain at its edge. I had been measuring the kolam by the wrong clock, the one that counts only what remains.

3 When the bus horn sounded, Paati held out the bowl instead of finishing the pattern herself. I added one last curve, not quite symmetrical, then ran with flour on my cuff. Through the window I could still see our doorway, bright against the damp street. I did not decide that robots mattered less, or that every visitor would notice our work. I pictured Mr. Ravi coming home to a bare step and imagined drawing another kolam tomorrow. The bus lurched forward. In my bag, the motor waited; on my sleeve, a white fingerprint slowly faded.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does telling the story in first person shape what you notice about the narrator's first attempt to draw the kolam? Use one detail.

2. Mr. Ravi says the rain will erase the kolam, while Paati says the entrance is ready for visitors. How do their words offer different ways to value it?

3. How does the narrator's experience with school projects shape her first response to Mr. Ravi? Which phrase shows her view changing?

4. Why might the writer end with both the waiting motor and the fading fingerprint? Explain how this choice shapes the story's meaning.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph about how an experience of your own shapes your reading of the narrator's decision to draw the kolam. Explain how someone with a different experience might read that decision, and use one passage detail to show how the first-person narration affects your interpretation.

The Wrong Clock

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details shaped by the narrator's point of view, circle a phrase that shows what another character values, and write 1 and 2 beside the narrator's early and later interpretations of the kolam. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does telling the story in first person shape what you notice about the narrator's first attempt to draw the kolam? Use one detail.	**The narrator compares her skill at wiring motors with her difficulty guiding flour, so readers notice her uncertainty rather than just the pattern she makes.**
2	Mr. Ravi says the rain will erase the kolam, while Paati says the entrance is ready for visitors. How do their words offer different ways to value it?	**Mr. Ravi points to how briefly the kolam will last. Paati values what it does for people who arrive today, even if it disappears.**
3	How does the narrator's experience with school projects shape her first response to Mr. Ravi? Which phrase shows her view changing?	**She is used to making projects that last for judges, so she nearly agrees that an erasable kolam has little value. "The wrong clock" shows her reconsidering that measure.**
4	Why might the writer end with both the waiting motor and the fading fingerprint? Explain how this choice shapes the story's meaning.	**The two objects show that the narrator still cares about robotics while beginning to value the temporary kolam. She does not have to choose one interest over the other.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I have made sidewalk chalk drawings with my younger cousin, so I see the fading fingerprint as a reminder that a brief activity can still matter. A reader who spends weeks protecting a painting might focus instead on the rain and feel frustrated that the kolam will vanish. Because the narrator tells the story herself, I first feel her impatience about the robotics match and then notice her shift when she imagines drawing another kolam. The motor waiting in her bag shows me that joining Paati did not mean giving up her other interests.

Accept interpretations grounded in passage details, including readings that see the ending as uncertain rather than resolved. For Part 3, look for a clear link between experience, interpretation, and the narrator's first-person account.