Answering the Bell

Three original tales, one difficult choice

9-10.RL.9 "Analyze a variety of related literary texts including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics. Explain how an author draws upon or alludes to source material."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In each tale, underline the details borrowed from the 1880 source tale. Circle the choice the main character makes so you can compare how the two later tales change its meaning.

Three Tales at the River

1. **The Reed Bridge Bell (1880).** When spring water swallowed the road, the village hung a brass bell beside the bridge. Anyone stranded on the far bank could ring it three times, and the ferryman would come, even after dark. One night Mara heard three clear strikes while her brother lay feverish at home. She took the ferry rope anyway. Across the river stood a stranger with an empty basket. "I have nothing to pay you," he said. Mara pointed to the bell. "That was never the price." By morning, her brother had died; she had given a stranger passage but lost her last chance to speak with him.

2. **The Lantern Keeper (1912).** The river rose until the bridge vanished, but its brass bell still hung from a post. Three strikes came through the rain. Leda held the ferry rope; inside her house, her father struggled to breathe. Across the water she could make out a figure lifting an empty basket. Leda tied the rope to the post and went indoors. "A bell cannot choose for me," she told her father. At dawn, the far bank was empty. She never learned whether the stranger found another crossing, and she kept the bell's sound in her dreams.

3. **The River Vote (1914).** Three strikes sounded from the brass bell beyond the flooded bridge. Ivo had promised to stay with his sick mother, yet someone waited across the water with an empty basket. Rather than take the ferry alone, he woke the neighbors. One brought a lamp, another carried blankets, and two held the rope while Ivo steered. The stranger crossed safely; then the neighbors stayed to tend Ivo's mother. Later, they agreed to keep a night watch whenever the river rose. "No one should have to answer that bell alone," Ivo said.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which details show that *The Lantern Keeper* draws on *The Reed Bridge Bell*? How does Leda's choice change the source tale's conflict?

2. How does *The River Vote* use the source tale's bell and ferry but change who answers the call?

3. The 1912 and 1914 tales both show a choice between a sick family member and a stranded stranger. What different ideas about responsibility do their endings suggest?

4. Compare what the empty basket suggests about the stranger in the 1880 tale and in the 1914 tale. How does each character respond?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 110 word scene set somewhere other than a river. Reuse the source tale's bell and empty basket, but change how the characters respond to make a new point about responsibility.

ANSWER KEY

Answering the Bell

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.RL.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In each tale, underline the details borrowed from the 1880 source tale. Circle the choice the main character makes so you can compare how the two later tales change its meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which details show that *The Lantern Keeper* draws on *The Reed Bridge Bell*? How does Leda's choice change the source tale's conflict?	**Both tales include three bell strikes, a flooded bridge, a ferry rope, an empty basket, and a sick family member. Unlike Mara, Leda stays with her family instead of crossing for the stranger.**
2	How does *The River Vote* use the source tale's bell and ferry but change who answers the call?	**The bell still signals a stranger across the river, and a ferry still brings the stranger over. Ivo asks his neighbors to help rather than making the crossing alone as Mara does.**
3	The 1912 and 1914 tales both show a choice between a sick family member and a stranded stranger. What different ideas about responsibility do their endings suggest?	**Leda stays with her father, but the stranger's fate remains unknown and the bell haunts her. Ivo shares the work with his neighbors, allowing them to help both the stranger and his mother.**
4	Compare what the empty basket suggests about the stranger in the 1880 tale and in the 1914 tale. How does each character respond?	**In both tales, the empty basket suggests the stranger has little to offer in payment. Mara takes the stranger across without payment, while Ivo gathers neighbors to help the stranger cross.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the mountain shelter, three strikes rang from the brass bell by the food cupboard. Nia found a hiker holding an empty basket. The shelves behind her were nearly bare, and a storm would trap everyone for days. Instead of handing over the last loaf, she asked what the basket could carry back. Together they collected fallen branches, lit the stove, and made soup from the shelter's dried beans. Nia divided it into bowls, including one for the stranger. The bell had called for help, but responsibility meant keeping enough for everyone still inside.

Accept other interpretations supported by specific details from the tales. For Part 3, look for a new setting, both source objects, a changed response, and a clear idea about responsibility.