A Voice in Motion

Notice how word choice gives a narrator a distinct voice.

9-10.W.3.e "Establish a clear voice."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase in each paragraph that makes the narrator's voice recognizable. Number the phrases 1 to 3, then circle one word in each phrase that reveals the narrator's attitude.

The Repair Table

1. The first time I volunteered at the school bicycle repair table, I brought a multitool and the confidence of a person who had watched exactly two videos. By noon, I had learned that confidence cannot tighten a loose brake cable. A seventh grader rolled up with a bike that shrieked whenever she stopped. She looked at the line behind her, then at me, as if I were the entire transportation department. I told her we would figure it out together. That sounded reassuring, which was convenient, because I had no idea where to begin.

2. Our advisor, Ms. Vega, pointed to the wheel and asked what changed when the brake lever moved. The pads touched the rim, but one pad dragged against the tire. Even I could see that the tire had not signed up to be sandpaper. Ms. Vega showed me how to loosen the pad's bolt and move the pad until it met only the rim. I tightened the bolt while she checked my work. We tested the brakes by walking the bike and squeezing each lever. The terrible noise faded to a brief squeak. Progress, apparently, had a soundtrack.

3. The student asked whether her bike was fixed. I wanted to say yes, stamp an imaginary certificate, and clear the line. Instead, I told her the pad no longer rubbed the tire, but the brakes still needed a closer check before she rode. Ms. Vega took over, and I wrote down what we had tried. The next bike arrived with a flat tire and a rider who looked ready to miss practice. I reached for the pump, then stopped to inspect the tire first. Those two videos had not made me an expert. The afternoon had, however, taught me where to start asking questions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, which words make the narrator sound less certain than an expert? Explain their effect on the narrator's voice.

2. How does the phrase "the tire had not signed up to be sandpaper" make the narrator's voice distinctive?

3. How does the contrast between the "imaginary certificate" and what the narrator actually tells the rider shape the narrator's voice?

4. Compare the narrator's view of their skills in paragraphs 1 and 3. What consistent attitude comes through? Use one detail from each paragraph.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a first-person scene of 80 to 100 words about trying a task that is new to you. Establish a consistent, recognizable voice through your word choices and reactions, and show one decision the narrator makes.

ANSWER KEY

A Voice in Motion

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.W.3.e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase in each paragraph that makes the narrator's voice recognizable. Number the phrases 1 to 3, then circle one word in each phrase that reveals the narrator's attitude. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, which words make the narrator sound less certain than an expert? Explain their effect on the narrator's voice.	**The narrator says they had watched "exactly two videos" and had "no idea where to begin." These admissions give the voice a self-deprecating, honest quality.**
2	How does the phrase "the tire had not signed up to be sandpaper" make the narrator's voice distinctive?	**The narrator describes the rubbing brake pad with an unexpected joke, giving the voice a playful, observant quality.**
3	How does the contrast between the "imaginary certificate" and what the narrator actually tells the rider shape the narrator's voice?	**The imagined certificate is a joke about wanting a quick answer. The narrator instead admits the brakes need another check, so the voice remains humorous but responsible.**
4	Compare the narrator's view of their skills in paragraphs 1 and 3. What consistent attitude comes through? Use one detail from each paragraph.	**The narrator does not pretend to be an expert. In paragraph 1, two videos have not prepared them to fix the bike. In paragraph 3, they again reject the expert label and focus on asking questions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I volunteered to frost the cupcakes, though I'd never iced one before, because spreading icing sounded suspiciously like spreading peanut butter. The first cupcake emerged wearing a lopsided winter hat. My cousin leaned over the counter and asked if it was supposed to look like that. I considered telling her it was modern art, but the other eleven cupcakes were waiting. I scraped off the icing, warmed the spatula in a cup of hot water, and tried again. The next swirl held its shape. I still wouldn't hire myself for a wedding, but I could handle a bake sale.

For the marking task, accept different phrases if the circled words support a clear account of the narrator's attitude. For Your Turn, look for a distinct voice sustained through the narrator's reactions and decision, not just a description of the task.