When Voices Carry

Trace how a narrator turns a setback into a change of perspective.

9-10.W.3 "Write narratives or other creative texts (e.g., poetry, digital composition, graphic stories, memoirs) to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique and voice, well-chosen details..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the problem in the first paragraph, number three actions that move the story forward, and circle a detail that makes the scene vivid. These marks will help you see how the ending grows from earlier events.

Closer

(1) At the school poetry night, I stood behind a microphone that smelled faintly of pennies. Across the cafeteria, folding chairs stretched to the exit doors, where my mother sat in the last row, still wearing her grocery store apron. I had practiced my poem all week, but only into the bathroom mirror. Ms. Alvarez raised two fingers from the sound table. I opened my mouth. The speaker popped, hissed, and went silent. A few people laughed softly. My page trembled against the music stand. From the back of the room, my mother leaned forward, too far away to hear a whisper.

(2) Ms. Alvarez tapped the cable and shook her head. "We can wait for the spare," she said, though the clock above the serving window showed we had ten minutes left. The next reader held his poem against his chest. I could surrender the stage and let everyone keep their neat rows, or make them move. "Could you bring the chairs closer?" I asked. For a moment no one stood. Then my mother dragged hers across the tile. One scrape became twenty, a rough little orchestra. The empty space between the stage and the audience shrank until I could see her name tag.

(3) I stepped down from the stage. Without the speaker, my first line came out thin, so I began again and let each word reach the nearest faces before sending out the next. My poem was about a bridge we used to cross on our walks home, its loose boards knocking beneath our shoes. Halfway through, I saw the next reader lower his page and listen. When I finished, nobody shouted. My mother pressed her palms together once, then everyone followed. Later, as we stacked chairs, I realized the microphone had not made my voice brave. The distance had made me think I needed it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the seating arrangement make the microphone failure a problem for the narrator?

2. How do the narrator's request and the mother's response change what happens next?

3. What does "One scrape became twenty, a rough little orchestra" show about the audience's response?

4. How do the final two sentences change the meaning of the microphone failure?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph of 85 to 105 words about a character whose plan fails during an important moment. Establish the setting and problem, include one line of dialogue and one vivid sound or sight, then show a choice, its result, and a final sentence that reflects a change in the character's thinking.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the problem in the first paragraph, number three actions that move the story forward, and circle a detail that makes the scene vivid. These marks will help you see how the ending grows from earlier events. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the seating arrangement make the microphone failure a problem for the narrator?	**The chairs stretch to the exit, and the narrator's mother is in the last row, too far away to hear an unamplified voice.**
2	How do the narrator's request and the mother's response change what happens next?	**The narrator asks people to move closer. The mother moves first, prompting others to follow so the narrator can read without a microphone.**
3	What does "One scrape became twenty, a rough little orchestra" show about the audience's response?	**The sound grows from one moving chair to many, showing that the audience joins the mother and helps close the distance.**
4	How do the final two sentences change the meaning of the microphone failure?	**The narrator first sees the broken microphone as a reason not to read. After reading to the closer audience, the narrator realizes the microphone was not the source of their courage.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The bakery's freezer alarm shrieked as Dad lifted the last tray of dough. "We have to close," he said, staring at the dark display. Outside, snow blurred the streetlights; inside, three birthday cakes waited for tomorrow. I wanted to argue, but I carried the cakes next door to Mrs. Chen's restaurant, where her freezer still hummed. She cleared a shelf without asking for anything. By morning, our dough was ruined, but every cake was safe. As Dad handed Mrs. Chen a warm loaf from the first new batch, I understood that saving our bakery sometimes meant trusting someone else.

For the marking task, accept any three correctly ordered actions that advance the response to the failed microphone. For Your Turn, accept varied situations if the events build toward a result and the final reflection follows from that result.