Harbor at Dusk

Trace how word choices shape a stormy scene.

7.9.F "analyze how the author's use of language contributes to mood, voice, and tone; and"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three words or phrases that create a tense or uncertain mood. Circle two words or phrases near the ending that create a calmer or more hopeful mood, then write T or H in the margin beside each one.

The Late Ferry

1 At 5:42, the last ferry slipped away from the dock, leaving Mara on the island side with a backpack, a cracked phone, and an hour before the storm arrived. The harbor, busy all afternoon, had folded into silence. Ropes tapped the empty pilings like nervous fingers. Across the black water, town lights trembled in the wind. Mara pulled her rain jacket tight, though the air felt strangely warm. She told herself that missing one ferry was not a disaster. Still, the darkening clouds seemed to gather directly above her.

2 Near the closed ticket booth, an old man swept rainwater from the wooden boards. His yellow rain hat shone like a small lantern, but his broom moved slowly, carefully. "The next boat comes at dawn," he said, without looking up. His calm voice did not match the restless sky. Mara wanted to ask whether the ferry could return, whether someone had called her mother, whether the storm would turn. Instead, she watched a paper cup roll along the dock, pause at her shoe, and tumble into the waves.

3 Then Mara noticed a narrow skiff tied behind the bait shop. Its blue paint was peeled and pale, and rain had begun to freckle its seats. The boat looked too small for the harbor's broad, heaving water. She stepped toward it, then stopped. From the booth, the old man cleared his throat. "Some things wait for daylight," he said. Mara listened. Beneath the wind and the knocking ropes, she heard a low engine growl. A ferry, late but steady, pushed through the gray curtain of rain.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the comparison of the ropes to “nervous fingers” affect the mood of the first paragraph?

2. What contrast does the author create with the old man's “calm voice” and the “restless sky”? How does this contrast affect the tone?

3. The narrator describes details such as a cracked phone, a rolling paper cup, and peeled paint. What do these specific details reveal about the narrator's voice?

4. How does the mood change in the final two sentences? Use one phrase from the passage as evidence.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence scene about waiting for something important. Use at least two sensory details and one comparison to create a tense mood that becomes hopeful by the last sentence. Then add one sentence explaining how one word or phrase shapes the mood.

ANSWER KEY # Harbor at Dusk

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three words or phrases that create a tense or uncertain mood. Circle two words or phrases near the ending that create a calmer or more hopeful mood, then write T or H in the margin beside each one. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the comparison of the ropes to "nervous fingers" affect the mood of the first paragraph?	**It creates a tense, uneasy mood because the ropes seem restless and anxious.**
2	What contrast does the author create with the old man's "calm voice" and the "restless sky"? How does this contrast affect the tone?	**The man is calm while the weather is unsettled. The contrast gives the scene a measured, reassuring tone within the danger.**
3	The narrator describes details such as a cracked phone, a rolling paper cup, and peeled paint. What do these specific details reveal about the narrator's voice?	**They reveal an observant, descriptive voice that focuses on small, concrete details.**
4	How does the mood change in the final two sentences? Use one phrase from the passage as evidence.	**The mood shifts from uncertainty to cautious hope. "Late but steady" suggests that help has finally arrived.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the bus stop, cold rain drummed on Lila's umbrella while the streetlights blinked over the empty road. Her phone battery flashed red, and each passing car sounded like a promise that vanished. Then headlights curved around the corner, bright as a doorway opening. The bus hissed to the curb, and Lila's tight shoulders loosened. The phrase "bright as a doorway opening" makes the mood hopeful because it suggests a way forward.

Accept different mood and tone terms when students support them with accurate words or phrases from the passage. For the writing task, accept varied topics if the response has four scene sentences, sensory details, a comparison, a clear mood shift, and a one-sentence explanation.