

Observatory After Dark

Track language that shifts a scene from unease to wonder.

8.9.F “analyze how the author's use of language contributes to the mood, voice, and tone; and”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three words or phrases that create an uneasy mood, and circle three that create a calmer or more hopeful mood. Number the marks in the order they appear to show how the author changes the tone.

The Hilltop Dome

- ① By the time I reached the hilltop observatory, dusk had folded the town into a blue-gray hush. The building stood above the pines, its cracked dome tilted like a listening ear. Wind worried the loose shutter beside the door, making it tap against the stone. I told myself the sound was ordinary, but I held my flashlight tighter and stepped inside. The air smelled of wet metal and old paper. Each footstep stirred dust that drifted through the beam like pale insects.
- ② Inside, the main room was crowded with silent machines. Brass wheels gleamed beneath blankets of dust, and a long telescope pointed through the open slit in the dome. I expected the place to feel empty. Instead, it seemed busy with waiting. The clock on the wall had stopped at 11:17, yet its hands looked ready to move. Even the darkness gathered politely in the corners, as if it had been asked to leave space for someone important.
- ③ Then a gap in the clouds opened, and moonlight spilled across the floor. It found a notebook on the telescope table, its pages swollen from damp. On the first page, an astronomer had written, “Tonight, Mars is bright enough to find without a map.” The sentence was plain, almost cheerful. I looked up through the dome. A red point trembled above the trees, small but steady, and the observatory no longer felt haunted. It felt patient, keeping watch over a sky that had not forgotten it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Which phrase in paragraph 1 creates an uneasy mood? Explain how the phrase affects the mood.

2 How do the phrases "busy with waiting" and "ready to move" affect the mood in paragraph 2?

3 What kind of narrator voice does the author create through the phrases "I told myself" and "I held my flashlight tighter"?

4 How does the author's tone change from paragraph 1 to paragraph 3? Use one phrase from each paragraph as evidence.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a three-sentence description of a place that begins tense and ends calm. Then name two exact words or phrases you chose and explain, in one sentence, how they change the tone.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three words or phrases that create an uneasy mood, and circle three that create a calmer or more hopeful mood. Number the marks in the order they appear to show how the author changes the tone. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which phrase in paragraph 1 creates an uneasy mood? Explain how the phrase affects the mood.	Possible answer: "Wind worried the loose shutter" creates unease because the wind is described as if it can act on purpose, making the sound seem threatening.
2	How do the phrases "busy with waiting" and "ready to move" affect the mood in paragraph 2?	They make the observatory seem mysterious and expectant, as though something important may happen.
3	What kind of narrator voice does the author create through the phrases "I told myself" and "I held my flashlight tighter"?	The narrator has a cautious, nervous, observant voice. These phrases show the narrator trying to stay calm while feeling afraid.
4	How does the author's tone change from paragraph 1 to paragraph 3? Use one phrase from each paragraph as evidence.	The tone shifts from uneasy to calm and wonder-filled. In paragraph 1, "dusk had folded the town into a blue-gray hush" feels unsettling, while in paragraph 3, "moonlight spilled across the floor" and "small but steady" create a peaceful, hopeful feeling.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The hallway flickered as rain scratched the windows, and my shoes clicked too loudly on the tile. At the far end, a custodian opened a door, letting warm yellow light spill across the floor. I followed it, breathing more slowly as the building settled into silence. "Scratched" makes the opening feel tense, while "warm yellow light" makes the ending feel calm and safe.

Accept different quoted language if the student accurately explains its effect on mood, voice, or tone. For the writing task, accept varied settings and moods when the language clearly creates a tense beginning and a calm ending.