

Beacon at the Reef

Track cause and effect, character contrast, and audience speech in a short play.

10.RL.1 “Key Ideas and Plot Details Analyze the development of universal themes (e.g., survival of the fittest, coming of age, power of love) prevalent in world literature (e.g., short stories, poems, plays, novels...)”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details that show an event causing, or warning of, another event, and number them in plot order. Circle each time a character speaks privately to or directly addresses the audience to show thoughts the other characters may not hear.

The Harbor Lamp

- ① [A moonlit dock in a fictional Swahili coast town, about 1700.] Nia sees a fishing boat beyond the reef as clouds cover the moon. She runs to the signal tower, but her uncle Bako blocks the stairs. “The council forbids anyone to light the beacon before dawn,” he says. Nia answers, “My brother is on that boat.” Bako points to the tower’s frayed rope. “Pull it, and the old lamp may fall.” He exits to fetch the council. Alone, Nia turns to the audience: “If I obey, I may lose him. If I act, I may harm us all.” The rope snaps softly above her.
- ② Bako returns carrying a council sash, yet no council members follow him. “They will decide soon,” he says. Nia knots her headscarf around the broken rope, making a rough loop. Bako catches her wrist. “Your brother chose the water. Do not risk the town for one person.” Aside to the audience, Bako whispers, “When my father drowned, I promised never to challenge the sea again.” Nia frees her hand. “I am not challenging the sea. I am warning those upon it.” She climbs. Below, a gust swings the unlit lamp toward the rocks.
- ③ Nia reaches the platform as the boat drifts closer to the reef. The repaired rope holds long enough for her to raise the lamp. Its beam sweeps the water, and the boat changes course toward the harbor. Bako rushes up after her, carrying a second lantern. “I feared loss so much that I nearly caused it,” he says. Nia faces the audience. “Love is not only keeping someone near. It is choosing what may keep many people safe.” As dawn arrives, village bells answer from shore, and Bako helps her secure the lamp before the next storm.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 What universal theme does the scene develop? Explain how Nia's choices or words develop that theme.

2 Explain how Bako's warning about the rope gives rise to Nia's later action and the boat's rescue.

3 How is Bako a foil to Nia? Explain how their contrast affects the theme.

4 How do Bako's aside and Nia's direct addresses to the audience contribute to the play's effect?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a 6 to 8 line scene set in a place different from this passage. Include a hero, a foil, an aside or direct address, and one event that causes a later event or foreshadows it, then write exactly two sentences explaining how the character contrast and plot structure develop a universal theme.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three details that show an event causing, or warning of, another event, and number them in plot order. Circle each time a character speaks privately to or directly addresses the audience to show thoughts the other characters may not hear. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What universal theme does the scene develop? Explain how Nia's choices or words develop that theme.	The scene develops the theme that love can require courageous action for the safety of others. Nia risks climbing the tower to warn the boat, and she says love means choosing what may keep many people safe.
2	Explain how Bako's warning about the rope gives rise to Nia's later action and the boat's rescue.	Bako's warning and the rope's snapping lead Nia to repair the rope with her headscarf. Because the repaired rope holds, she raises the lamp, and the boat sees its beam and turns toward the harbor.
3	How is Bako a foil to Nia? Explain how their contrast affects the theme.	Bako is Nia's foil because his fear makes him want to wait and avoid risk, while Nia acts to warn the boat. Their contrast shows that love can mean facing fear to protect others.
4	How do Bako's aside and Nia's direct addresses to the audience contribute to the play's effect?	Bako's aside reveals that his fear comes from his father's drowning, so the audience understands his motives. Nia's direct addresses reveal her difficult choice and later state the theme directly to the audience.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

[At a bridge before a flood.] Lina: The river is rising. I will open the gate so families can cross. Tomas: No. Save yourself, and let the gate stay locked. Lina [aside to audience]: His fear makes my choice clearer. [She turns the wheel, and the gate opens.] Tomas: Because you acted, the children can reach the hill. Lina: Courage protects more people than caution alone. Lina is the hero, while Tomas is her foil because his self-protective advice contrasts with her decision to help others. Lina's turning the wheel causes the gate to open, and the aside lets the audience see how that contrast develops the theme that courage can serve a community.

Accept equivalent theme statements supported by Nia's actions, Bako's fear, and the rescue sequence. For the open task, accept varied settings and themes if the response includes all required dramatic, character, and cause-and-effect elements.