Behind the Marquee

Analyze how language turns a city debate into a personal viewpoint.

10.RL.2.C "Analyze how authors use specific word choices, syntax, tone, and voice to convey the author's intent and viewpoint."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two word choices that make redevelopment seem cold or dismissive, circle two images that show the narrator's attachment to the theater, and number Ms. Alvarez's four brief statements. Use your marks to track how voice and tone reveal a viewpoint.

The Orion Theater

1 By noon, the old Orion Theater stood behind a chain-link fence, its gold letters removed one by one. City notices called the building "underused property," a phrase as flat as the gray plywood covering its doors. I remembered its lobby differently: warm bulbs, red carpet, and my father's hand steering me past the ticket window. Across the street, a banner promised LUXURY LOFTS. The words rose in tall, shining letters, as if height alone could make the plan honorable. No notice mentioned the people who had filled those seats.

2 At the council meeting, speakers received two minutes each. A developer described parking spaces, tax revenue, and "efficient use." His list clicked forward like a calculator. Then Ms. Alvarez, who had sold popcorn there for thirty years, lifted a faded photograph. "This place held us," she said. "After storms. After layoffs. After funerals." Her sentences were brief, but each pause made the room quieter. I watched council members study their papers while the photograph trembled in her hand. The meeting moved on, yet no one called the theater underused again.

3 Outside, rain began to darken the sidewalk. Workers covered the marquee with a blue tarp, quickly, carefully, almost politely. I wanted to call the action cruel, but the tarp looked less like violence than a bandage placed over a wound no one intended to treat. The council will vote next week. Perhaps the theater will fall, and perhaps the apartments will fill. Still, when I pass the fence, I will not see empty land awaiting improvement. I will see a neighborhood being taught to forget what it once made together.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the phrases “underused property” and “empty land awaiting improvement” differ from the narrator's descriptions of the theater? What viewpoint does this contrast reveal?

2. What is the effect of Ms. Alvarez's brief statements, “After storms. After layoffs. After funerals.”?

3. Why does the narrator compare the blue tarp to “a bandage placed over a wound no one intended to treat”? How does this comparison shape the tone?

4. How does the first-person voice, including the narrator's childhood memory and final statement, support the author's intent?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 3-4 sentence paragraph about a local place you think should be protected or changed. Use one repeated word and one sentence of five words or fewer to show your viewpoint, then add one sentence explaining how those choices create your tone.

ANSWER KEY

Behind the Marquee

GRADE 10 · 10.RL.2.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two word choices that make redevelopment seem cold or dismissive, circle two images that show the narrator's attachment to the theater, and number Ms. Alvarez's four brief statements. Use your marks to track how voice and tone reveal a viewpoint. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the phrases “underused property” and “empty land awaiting improvement” differ from the narrator's descriptions of the theater? What viewpoint does this contrast reveal?	**The official phrases reduce the theater to real estate, while the narrator describes its memories and community value. The contrast shows that the narrator opposes treating the theater as disposable.**
2	What is the effect of Ms. Alvarez's brief statements, “After storms. After layoffs. After funerals.”?	**The repeated sentence fragments create pauses and emphasis. They show that the theater supported people during serious community hardships.**
3	Why does the narrator compare the blue tarp to “a bandage placed over a wound no one intended to treat”? How does this comparison shape the tone?	**The comparison suggests that covering the theater hides harm instead of solving it. It creates a mournful, critical tone.**
4	How does the first-person voice, including the narrator's childhood memory and final statement, support the author's intent?	**The personal voice makes the loss feel immediate and human. It supports the intent to make readers question redevelopment that ignores a community's shared history.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The city plans to pave the small field behind our apartments. Each spring, children race through its clover, and grandparents rest beneath its maples. We need that breathing room. A parking lot may hold cars, but it cannot hold the neighborhood's memories. The repeated word “hold” and the short sentence create a protective, urgent tone that shows I oppose paving the field.

Accept reasonable analyses that connect specific language or syntax to tone, voice, viewpoint, or intent. For Part 3, accept varied topics when the response includes a clear viewpoint, a repeated word, a sentence of five words or fewer, and an accurate explanation of the effect.