

Beyond the Bin

Trace how a report's language influences readers.

11.RI.2.C "Recognize and analyze the author's purpose and impact of ambiguity, contradiction, paradox, oxymoron, irony, sarcasm, overstatement, and understatement in informational texts."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each phrase that uses ambiguity, contradiction, paradox, oxymoron, irony, sarcasm, overstatement, or understatement. In the margin, name the technique and write a few words about how it shapes the author's purpose.

The Long Life of a Short Use

- ① Most plastic packaging is designed for a brief task, such as carrying a sandwich or protecting a shipment. Its durability, however, creates a tension: the same material that survives rain and rough handling can remain in the environment long after its use ends. People often say they throw an item "away," but there is no true away on a connected planet. Discarded plastic may be buried, burned, exported, recycled, or carried by wind and water. Scientists have documented plastic debris and tiny plastic particles, called microplastics, in oceans, rivers, soil, and air.
- ② Recycling can reduce waste, but a recycling symbol does not guarantee that a particular item will become a new product. Local programs in many places accept different materials, and contamination can make collected items unusable. The gap is striking: packages may look recyclable while local facilities cannot process them. The result is a convenient burden: quick choices can shift costs to workers, taxpayers, and ecosystems. A campaign poster might claim that one reusable bottle will "save the planet." A skeptic might call billions of discarded items "a small cleanup problem."
- ③ Public reports often focus on tons collected or miles of shoreline cleaned, yet their language can also shape action. A plastic takeout fork is built to outlast the meal it serves. At a cleanup, one city volunteer said, "Sure, the river needed another wrapper." Such phrases can move readers beyond passive concern toward careful disposal, reuse, and support for local waste policies. Vivid language, however, should accompany evidence, not replace it. Numbers show scale, while carefully chosen words show why the issue matters to communities.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 In paragraph 1, what makes the word “away” ambiguous? How does that ambiguity support the author’s purpose?

2 Why is the contrast between a plastic item’s brief use and its long life a paradox? What response does this contrast invite from readers?

3 Name the technique used in each phrase: “convenient burden,” “save the planet,” and “a small cleanup problem.” How do these choices shape the reader’s view of plastic waste?

4 Which example in paragraph 3 uses irony, and which uses sarcasm? Explain the effect of each example.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word public-information paragraph about an everyday environmental issue other than plastic packaging. Include one paradox or oxymoron and one example of irony or sarcasm, then use your final sentence to explain how those choices support your purpose.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each phrase that uses ambiguity, contradiction, paradox, oxymoron, irony, sarcasm, overstatement, or understatement. In the margin, name the technique and write a few words about how it shapes the author's purpose. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what makes the word "away" ambiguous? How does that ambiguity support the author's purpose?	"Away" hides where discarded plastic actually goes. The ambiguity challenges the idea that disposal ends a person's responsibility and highlights plastic's connected environmental effects.
2	Why is the contrast between a plastic item's brief use and its long life a paradox? What response does this contrast invite from readers?	A material made for a short task can remain for a very long time, which is a paradox. It invites readers to question disposable products and consider reuse or careful disposal.
3	Name the technique used in each phrase: "convenient burden," "save the planet," and "a small cleanup problem." How do these choices shape the reader's view of plastic waste?	"Convenient burden" is an oxymoron, "save the planet" is overstatement, and "a small cleanup problem" is understatement. Together, they emphasize hidden costs, reject an overly simple solution, and expose the large scale of the problem.
4	Which example in paragraph 3 uses irony, and which uses sarcasm? Explain the effect of each example.	The fork that outlasts the meal uses irony because its durability exceeds its short purpose. The wrapper comment uses sarcasm because it pretends to welcome litter, while criticizing it. Both draw attention to waste and challenge disposable habits.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Food waste fills a needless gap between farms and tables. Households and businesses sometimes discard edible food because of blemishes, excess purchases, or confusing date labels. This fresh garbage is an oxymoron: food can be safe to eat when it is treated as waste. "Perfect, another banana traveling straight from the shelf to the landfill," a shopper might say, using sarcasm to criticize careless disposal. The oxymoron and sarcasm make the loss memorable and encourage planning, sharing, and proper storage.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately identify a technique and connect it to the author's purpose of informing readers about plastic waste while encouraging more responsible choices. For the open response, accept varied environmental topics and rhetorical choices if the paragraph meets the word count and final-sentence requirement.