Signals at Low Tide

Trace how key sentences shape a story's setting and plot.

11.RL.1.B "Describe how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the setting and plot."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four sentences that change what Mara knows, does, or decides. Number them 1 through 4 in the order they move the story from its beginning to its ending.

The Signal House

1 By late afternoon, the harbor had emptied beneath a pewter sky. Mara crossed the locked pier toward the old signal house, carrying her grandfather's brass key in her coat pocket. Tomorrow, the town council would decide whether to tear the building down. Inside, salt had whitened the windows, and the tide bell lay silent on its hook. Mara had come to photograph the room before it disappeared. Instead, she found a fresh page pinned to the radio desk: "At low tide, follow the light." She looked through the window at the darkening water.

2 At low tide, Mara climbed down the barnacled steps beside the signal house. The harbor floor, hidden for most of the day, stretched before her in black mud and silver pools. Near the channel marker, a lantern flashed twice. Mara remembered her grandfather teaching her that two flashes meant danger, not welcome. She followed the light to a stranded skiff, where a boy from the ferry crew waved beside a cracked fuel line. The note had not led her to a memory. It had sent her to a problem.

3 While Mara held the lantern high, the boy used her phone to call the harbor master. A patrol boat reached the skiff before the incoming tide covered the flats. By dawn, the rescue had traveled through town, faster than Mara's photographs could. At the council meeting, Mara placed the pinned note on the table and described the signal house's view of the channel. The mayor postponed demolition and ordered repairs to the bell and radio. Outside, the harbor brightened under a clear morning. Mara returned the brass key to her pocket, but left the door unlocked.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the opening sentence fit the beginning of the story? Explain how it develops the setting and prepares the reader for the plot.

2. How does the sentence, "At low tide, follow the light," change the direction of the plot?

3. Why does the author place the sentences, "The note had not led her to a memory. It had sent her to a problem," at the end of the second paragraph?

4. How does the final sentence contribute to the story's ending? Include both the setting and Mara's change.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose one sentence from the passage that is not named in the questions. In exactly three sentences, identify where it appears, explain how it connects to another part of the story, and describe how it develops both the setting and plot.

ANSWER KEY

Signals at Low Tide

GRADE 11 · 11.RL.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four sentences that change what Mara knows, does, or decides. Number them 1 through 4 in the order they move the story from its beginning to its ending. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the opening sentence fit the beginning of the story? Explain how it develops the setting and prepares the reader for the plot.	**It establishes an empty harbor under an ominous sky, creating an isolated setting that prepares for Mara's discovery and the danger that follows.**
2	How does the sentence, "At low tide, follow the light," change the direction of the plot?	**The note moves Mara from planning to photograph the signal house to taking action outside, where she finds the stranded skiff.**
3	Why does the author place the sentences, "The note had not led her to a memory. It had sent her to a problem," at the end of the second paragraph?	**They clarify the middle turning point: Mara's visit is no longer only about the past or the building's demolition, but about an immediate rescue.**
4	How does the final sentence contribute to the story's ending? Include both the setting and Mara's change.	**The unlocked door shows that the signal house is no longer being treated as a closed, forgotten place. It also shows Mara's new hope that the building will remain useful.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The sentence "Near the channel marker, a lantern flashed twice" appears in the middle of the story. It shifts the harbor from a quiet, abandoned-looking place to a dangerous working setting where signals matter. Because Mara notices the flashes, she goes to the skiff, and the action moves toward the rescue and the building's preservation.

Accept different sentences if students accurately identify the sentence's position in the structure and support their explanation with details from the passage. Responses should connect the chosen sentence to both a setting detail and a plot development.