

The Lantern Choice

Analyze devices in a literary turning point.

11.RL.2.C "Critique how authors use key literary devices (e.g., imagery, personification, symbolism) to contribute to the meaning of a text, including its character development, theme, conflict, and archetypes."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words or phrases that create imagery or personification, circle every reference to the lantern or its light, and number Mara's three key choices. Use your marks to track how the author builds conflict and meaning.

The Last Lantern

- ① At dusk, Mara climbed the abandoned lighthouse with her grandfather's brass lantern tucked beneath her coat. Below, the harbor lay empty, its boats tilted in mud like tired animals. For three months, the town council had forbidden anyone to signal ships toward the coast, claiming that the shoals were too dangerous during the war. Yet Mara's brother, a medic on a supply vessel, had promised to arrive before the first frost. Wind worried the broken windows and tugged at her sleeves, as if the tower itself wanted her to turn back. On the top landing, she struck a match.
- ② The flame opened a small gold eye, and the lantern threw a narrow path across the water. Mara remembered her grandfather, who had kept this light during storms and called it "a promise made visible." She also remembered the council's warning: one false signal could draw an enemy patrol toward homes hidden beyond the hill. The lantern's warm circle made the dark seem less like weather than a force with intentions. Holding it, Mara felt neither fearless nor helpless. She understood that choosing to shine the light might save her brother, but it could also expose every family sleeping below.
- ③ Then a bell sounded from the channel twice. Mara lifted the lantern toward the sea but stopped before setting it in the tower's window. In the black water, she saw not a ship but her reflection. The reflection split when a wave passed, making her look divided between two selves. Mara lowered the lantern and ran down the stairs to wake the council instead. She would not become the lone rescuer from the old tales, acting on courage alone. If the light was a promise, she decided, the promise belonged to the whole town, and the town had to choose what it would risk.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How does the personification of the wind and lighthouse in paragraph 1 strengthen Mara's conflict?

2 How does the contrast between the lantern's "small gold eye" and the surrounding darkness in paragraph 2 develop the stakes of Mara's choice?

3 How does the lantern's symbolism change from paragraph 2 to paragraph 3, and what does that change reveal about Mara?

4 Why does the author mention the "lone rescuer from the old tales" in paragraph 3? Explain how this archetype supports a theme of the passage.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a five-sentence alternate ending in which Mara reaches the council hall. Include one example of personification and one symbolic object other than the lantern. In your fifth sentence, explain how both devices develop Mara's conflict or the passage's theme.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline words or phrases that create imagery or personification, circle every reference to the lantern or its light, and number Mara's three key choices. Use your marks to track how the author builds conflict and meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the personification of the wind and lighthouse in paragraph 1 strengthen Mara's conflict?	It makes the setting seem to warn Mara away from lighting the lantern, which externalizes her fear and hesitation about risking the town.
2	How does the contrast between the lantern's "small gold eye" and the surrounding darkness in paragraph 2 develop the stakes of Mara's choice?	The fragile, warm light suggests hope and possible rescue, while the threatening darkness emphasizes the danger that one signal could bring to the town.
3	How does the lantern's symbolism change from paragraph 2 to paragraph 3, and what does that change reveal about Mara?	It shifts from a personal promise connected to Mara's brother and grandfather to a shared promise owed to the town. Mara develops from someone tempted by private loyalty into someone who accepts collective responsibility.
4	Why does the author mention the "lone rescuer from the old tales" in paragraph 3? Explain how this archetype supports a theme of the passage.	The author invokes and rejects the lone-hero archetype to show that courage is not always acting alone. The passage suggests that responsible choices may require cooperation and shared risk.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the council hall, the bell hammered against the silence while Mara placed her grandfather's compass on the table. Its needle trembled toward the harbor, turning the compass into a symbol of the town's uncertain moral direction. The council members argued, but Mara described the enemy patrol and her brother's vessel. Together, they sent a guarded boat to search the channel and kept the lighthouse dark. The personified bell intensifies the urgent conflict, while the compass shows Mara choosing shared judgment over isolated heroism.

Accept supported critiques that explain both the device and its effect on conflict, character, archetype, or theme. For the open task, accept varied alternate endings if they contain five sentences, personification, a symbolic object other than the lantern, and a final-sentence explanation.