Warnings Through Mazes

Figurative language and allusions shape a civic debate.

11.RV.1.F "Explain the meaning of figurative language and literary and classical allusions and analyze their role in texts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each figurative phrase and each literary or classical allusion. In the margin, write a brief note about its possible meaning and effect, adding more than one note when a phrase does more than one job.

The Rail Yard Vote

1 By noon, the city council chamber held the heat like a closed fist. Maya, a student reporter, watched residents fan themselves with zoning maps while the mayor unveiled a plan to replace an abandoned rail yard with apartments. On the screen, blue roofs climbed a digital hill, and a promised park gleamed at the top. Maya's notebook stayed open, but her pencil paused when Mr. Vale, who lived beside the yard, called the plan "Icarus with a building permit." Several council members smiled. The mayor did not. Outside, freight trains rattled past the chain-link fence, carrying the old neighborhood's dust into the sun.

2 During public comment, Leila Ortiz, a civil engineer, placed a jar of brown floodwater on the lectern. She had collected it from the underpass after last winter's storm. "The ground remembers," she said, tapping the glass. "You can pave over a warning, but it keeps knocking." She pointed to drainage channels missing from the presentation. When a council aide whispered that the maps were too gloomy, Leila answered, "Cassandra had that problem too." The room shifted. People who had been studying their phones looked up, and Maya drew a dark line beneath the proposed park.

3 After the vote was postponed, Maya walked to the rail yard with a group of residents. They tied blue ribbons along the curb where water had risen, a thin river running through the blocks. Mr. Vale carried a flashlight, though evening had barely begun. "We are not asking for a palace," he said. "Just a roof that does not become a boat." At the gate, Maya noticed a child winding ribbon around a broken sign. The ribbon looked like Ariadne's thread, leading from the maze of tracks toward the drainage ditch. Maya photographed it before the light disappeared.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does Mr. Vale likely mean when he calls the apartment plan "Icarus with a building permit"? Explain how this allusion shapes his criticism.

2. Explain the meaning of Leila's statement, "The ground remembers" and the idea that a warning "keeps knocking." How does this personification affect the reader's view of the flood risk?

3. Why does Leila mention Cassandra after the aide calls the flood maps gloomy? What role does the allusion play in the scene?

4. What does the comparison to Ariadne's thread suggest about the blue ribbon? Explain how the allusion adds meaning to Maya's final observation.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly four sentences about a local problem or public decision. Include one literary or classical allusion and one figurative comparison, then use the fourth sentence to explain how both choices shape your scene.

ANSWER KEY

Warnings Through Mazes

GRADE 11 · 11.RV.1.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each figurative phrase and each literary or classical allusion. In the margin, write a brief note about its possible meaning and effect, adding more than one note when a phrase does more than one job. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Mr. Vale likely mean when he calls the apartment plan "Icarus with a building permit"? Explain how this allusion shapes his criticism.	**He suggests that the development is dangerously ambitious and may fail because of overconfidence. The Icarus allusion makes his criticism sound like a warning about a preventable fall.**
2	Explain the meaning of Leila's statement, "The ground remembers" and the idea that a warning "keeps knocking." How does this personification affect the reader's view of the flood risk?	**Leila means that past flooding leaves evidence and will likely return if ignored. The personification makes the danger seem persistent and urgent.**
3	Why does Leila mention Cassandra after the aide calls the flood maps gloomy? What role does the allusion play in the scene?	**Leila compares herself to Cassandra, whose true warnings were not believed. The allusion shows that Leila expects officials to dismiss a serious warning and makes their response seem reckless.**
4	What does the comparison to Ariadne's thread suggest about the blue ribbon? Explain how the allusion adds meaning to Maya's final observation.	**The ribbon suggests a guide through the confusing rail yard toward the source of the flooding problem. The Ariadne allusion turns the residents' action into a search for a way through a difficult problem.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the meeting about the closed bridge, Rowan held up a photo of the cracked support. "Do not make me Cassandra at this microphone," he said when the chair tried to end public comment. Outside, the river pressed against the bridge like a patient giant. The Cassandra allusion suggests that Rowan expects his warning to be ignored, and the simile makes the river seem powerful and threatening.

Accept interpretations that accurately explain the reference or figurative language and connect it to the speaker's attitude, the conflict, or the scene's mood. For annotations, students may identify several effects for one phrase when they support those effects with details from the passage.