Bell at Dusk

Use performance clues to trace a speaker's purpose, tone, and emotional shifts.

12.C.2.B "Memorize and recite an excerpt or monologue from a dramatic work portraying the emotions and motivations of the character through voice and body language that conveys the intended tone and mood of the selection."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words that reveal what Mara feels or wants, circle each stage direction that guides voice or body language, and number three places where the tone shifts. Your marks should help you plan a recitation that makes Mara's motivation clear.

The Last Ferry

1. [Mara stands beside a closed ticket window, holding a brass ferry bell.] You want me to say the river took him, as if water can be blamed for every choice a person makes. [She sets the bell down carefully.] My brother heard the storm warning. He heard it, and he untied that boat anyway because Mrs. Vale's medicine was waiting across the channel. Do not call him reckless. Call him late, call him stubborn, but do not make his last act sound small to you.

2. [She faces the council table, shoulders squared.] You closed the ferry service after the accident, then posted a notice that says safety requires sacrifice. Whose sacrifice? Mine? His? [Her hand tightens around the bell.] For six months, people on the east bank have carried groceries along the highway, and old Mr. Doran has missed two clinic visits. You call that caution because the cost lands on families you never see. Reopen the route, with lights, radios, and trained crews. I am not asking you to forget Daniel. I am asking you to build the crossing he deserved.

3. [Mara lifts the bell but does not ring it.] I brought this because Daniel rang it at dawn, once for departure and twice when he saw someone running down the dock. He would wait. That is what you refuse to understand. A public service is not a clock that keeps perfect time, it is a promise that notices who is still trying to arrive. [She lowers her voice.] If you vote no tonight, I will leave this bell on your steps. Let it remind you that silence can be a decision, too.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What emotion is Mara trying to control in the first paragraph? Cite two words or phrases that reveal it.

2. What does Mara want the council to do, and what motivates her request? Use one detail about the east bank and one detail about Daniel.

3. Which stage direction in paragraph 2 supports a firm, confrontational delivery? Explain what it tells the performer to show.

4. How should a performer deliver Mara's final two sentences, and what mood should that choice create? Use the nearby stage direction as evidence.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 90 to 120 word original dramatic monologue in which a character seeks an important decision from another person. Include at least three parenthetical stage directions that guide voice or body language, then memorize and recite your monologue so the character's emotion, motivation, tone, and mood are clear.

ANSWER KEY

Bell at Dusk

GRADE 12 · 12.C.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline words that reveal what Mara feels or wants, circle each stage direction that guides voice or body language, and number three places where the tone shifts. Your marks should help you plan a recitation that makes Mara's motivation clear. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What emotion is Mara trying to control in the first paragraph? Cite two words or phrases that reveal it.	**She is controlling grief mixed with defensiveness. Evidence includes "the river took him," "do not call him reckless," and "his last act."**
2	What does Mara want the council to do, and what motivates her request? Use one detail about the east bank and one detail about Daniel.	**She wants the council to reopen the ferry with safer equipment and trained crews. East-bank residents face long trips and missed clinic visits, and she wants Daniel's death to lead to "the crossing he deserved."**
3	Which stage direction in paragraph 2 supports a firm, confrontational delivery? Explain what it tells the performer to show.	**"[She faces the council table, shoulders squared.]" It tells the performer to show resolve and direct challenge rather than hesitation.**
4	How should a performer deliver Mara's final two sentences, and what mood should that choice create? Use the nearby stage direction as evidence.	**The performer should lower her voice and speak steadily, creating a grave, ominous mood. The direction "[She lowers her voice.]" prepares the warning about silence being a decision.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

[Nia grips a folded map, then forces her hands open.] You keep saying the shelter is full, but my grandfather is sitting outside with a fever and a coat that will not close. [She points toward the rain-streaked door.] I did not walk three miles to argue about forms. I came because you have a spare cot behind that desk, and you know it. [Her voice drops, steady rather than soft.] If rules matter more than people tonight, write my name beside his. I will stay there until morning, so you can explain why two beds were empty.

Accept performance interpretations that are supported by Mara's diction and stage directions. For Part 3, accept any 90 to 120 word monologue with at least three useful stage directions and a recitation plan that communicates a clear motivation, emotional shift, tone, and mood.