

Beacon in Fog

Track parallel story lines to see how clues create suspense and surprise.

12.RL.1.B “Examine how authors structure a text and order events within it through parallel episodes, subplots, and conflicts, and explain how they create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the note, the wet-rope detail, and the chart mark, then number them 1, 2, and 3 in the order Elena learns them. Circle the sentences that describe Malik's separate meeting with his grandfather to see how the author builds mystery through two story lines.

The Last Beacon

- ① At dusk, Elena climbed the locked stairwell of Bellweather Station, where the town's old signal lamp had failed on the night of the ferry race. A note waited beneath the door: “Light is not lost. It is moved.” Elena folded it into her pocket as Malik arrived with a wrench and a scowl. His grandfather, the station's retired keeper, had ordered him to stay away from the building. From the pier, a bell rang once, though no ferry was due. Elena looked toward the black water, but the fog concealed every boat.
- ② While Elena searched the station office, Malik crossed the courtyard to confront his grandfather at the gate. The old man would not meet his eyes. “I kept the lamp dark to stop someone from following the race course,” he said, then pressed a brass key into Malik's hand and walked away. Upstairs, Elena found the lamp's empty housing and a wet rope leading through a window. A second bell sounded from the pier. Malik returned, hiding the key until Elena asked what his grandfather had said. Instead of answering, he used it to open a cabinet labeled WEATHER LOGS. Inside lay a chart with one fresh mark at Pier 6.
- ③ Elena traced the chart's mark to a maintenance shed beneath the pier, while Malik remained at the cabinet, reading his grandfather's log. There he learned that a smuggler had once used the race's lamp signals to guide boats through fog. At the shed, Elena found no lamp, only a mirror aimed toward the water. Then Malik shouted from above: the fresh mark was not a route but a warning, because Pier 6 had been inspected that afternoon. The rope suddenly tightened. A small boat drifted from the fog, towing the stolen lamp below its deck. Elena raised the mirror, flashing the harbor patrol, and the boat turned away.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How do the first two paragraphs create parallel episodes? Identify what Elena does and what Malik does.

2 How does Malik's decision to hide the brass key create tension in paragraph 2?

3 Explain how the author orders the note, the wet rope, and the chart mark to build mystery.

4 What surprise does the final paragraph reveal about the chart mark at Pier 6, and how does that change the danger Elena faces?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 6 to 8 sentence outline for a new mystery scene. Use two parallel episodes, include a conflict in one episode, and reveal at least three clues in an order that creates tension before a surprise.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the note, the wet-rope detail, and the chart mark, then number them 1, 2, and 3 in the order Elena learns them. Circle the sentences that describe Malik's separate meeting with his grandfather to see how the author builds mystery through two story lines. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the first two paragraphs create parallel episodes? Identify what Elena does and what Malik does.	Elena searches for clues about the missing lamp inside the station, while Malik confronts his grandfather outside. The alternating episodes divide the reader's attention and delay the meaning of the key.
2	How does Malik's decision to hide the brass key create tension in paragraph 2?	It makes readers wonder what his grandfather told him and why Malik will not share it. The delayed information keeps the key's purpose uncertain.
3	Explain how the author orders the note, the wet rope, and the chart mark to build mystery.	The note first suggests that the lamp was moved. The wet rope suggests someone removed it through the window, and the chart mark gives a possible location without fully explaining what the mark means.
4	What surprise does the final paragraph reveal about the chart mark at Pier 6, and how does that change the danger Elena faces?	The mark is a warning, not a route to the lamp. Elena realizes that a boat is already escaping through the fog with the stolen lamp.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

While Nia searched the closed museum gallery for a missing compass, her brother Tomas argued with their aunt in the loading dock. The aunt gave Tomas a sealed envelope but told him not to open it, so he hid it when Nia called. Nia first noticed salt water beneath a display case, then found a freight schedule with one departure circled. Meanwhile, Tomas learned from the envelope that their aunt had reported a theft years earlier and feared the same thief had returned. When Nia followed the schedule to the dock, readers may expect the circled ship to carry the compass. Instead, the ship's departure time was a warning that the thief had already placed the compass inside a crate headed for a different truck. By alternating the search with Tomas's family conflict and releasing clues in stages, the scene creates tension before the surprise.

Accept responses that accurately connect the alternating Elena and Malik episodes to delayed information, tension, or mystery. For the open task, accept varied settings and events if the response has 6 to 8 sentences, two parallel episodes, a conflict, three ordered clues, and a surprise.