Beacon Against Dark

Analyze how precise diction shapes tone and mood in a suspenseful scene.

12.RL.2.B "Interpret and analyze how authors create intended effects using diction and impact the tone and mood of the story, play, or poem."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four diction choices that shape the passage's tone or mood, then write a one- or two-word effect beside each underline.

At Blackwater Point

1 By dusk, Mara had climbed the iron stairs of Blackwater Light a dozen times. The lamp had failed at noon, and the radio now spat only static. Beyond the glass, the sea heaved against the breakwater, shouldering the stones with a patient violence. Mara kept one hand on the railing as she carried kerosene upward. Each step groaned beneath her boots. Below, a ferry was due before midnight, its passengers trusting a small white signal they could not yet see through rain and fog.

2 At the lantern room, she found the wick drowned in black oil. Her father's old instructions lay beside the brass housing, their edges curled like burnt leaves. Do not rush, he had written years ago. Hurry makes small mistakes enormous. Mara struck one match. Wind knifed through a cracked pane and erased it. She struck another, shielding the flame inside her cupped palms. For a moment, the room smelled of sulfur and wet wool. Then the wick caught, breathing out a thin amber glow over the lens.

3 The beam did not conquer the storm. It moved through it, a narrow blade turning over the water every few seconds. When Mara looked down, she saw the ferry's deck lights blink once, then twice, beyond the reef. No cheer rose in the tower. Instead, she wiped oil from her hands and listened to the gears resume their steady clicking. Outside, the dark kept its distance. For the first time that night, Mara let herself breathe slowly. The light went on measuring the black water.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the phrase “patient violence” affect the tone of the opening paragraph?

2. How does the diction describing Mara’s second match, especially “shielding” and “cupped palms,” shape the mood?

3. Why does the author write that the beam “did not conquer the storm” but “moved through it”?

4. What is the effect of stating that “No cheer rose in the tower” before describing the steady clicking of the gears?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a two-sentence continuation of the scene that creates a restrained mood of relief rather than triumph. Use at least three precise diction choices, and include a parenthetical note that names one word or phrase and explains its effect.

ANSWER KEY # Beacon Against Dark

GRADE 12 · 12.RL.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four diction choices that shape the passage's tone or mood, then write a one- or two-word effect beside each underline. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the phrase "patient violence" affect the tone of the opening paragraph?	**It makes the sea seem powerful, relentless, and threatening, creating a tense tone.**
2	How does the diction describing Mara's second match, especially "shielding" and "cupped palms," shape the mood?	**It creates a fragile, suspenseful mood by showing that the small flame needs careful protection.**
3	Why does the author write that the beam "did not conquer the storm" but "moved through it"?	**The contrast makes the light seem limited but meaningful. It creates restrained hope rather than a triumphant mood.**
4	What is the effect of stating that "No cheer rose in the tower" before describing the steady clicking of the gears?	**It keeps the ending calm and controlled, emphasizing quiet relief and continued responsibility instead of celebration.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On the radio, the captain's voice arrived faint but level, confirming that the ferry had cleared the reef. Mara lowered the chimney glass, and the lamp's quiet pulse filled the room while dawn thinned the clouds (The phrase "quiet pulse" makes the relief feel calm and continuing rather than celebratory.).

Accept answers that identify specific diction and explain a defensible effect on tone or mood. For the open task, look for exactly two sentences, at least three purposeful word choices, and an accurate explanation of one choice's effect.