

The Listening Office

Track how a speaker's words can mean more than they say.

12.RL.2.C "Evaluate the use of satire, sarcasm, irony, and understatement to differentiate between what is directly stated and what is implied."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline phrases whose literal meaning differs from their implied meaning, then write S for satire, SC for sarcasm, I for irony, or U for understatement beside each one.

Listening Achieved

- ① At 7:45, Mara arrived at Northbridge High for her first meeting as Director of Student Voice. The principal had created the position after students protested the cancellation of the late bus from the library. On the office door, a brass plaque announced, "Every opinion matters." Inside, the desk held a phone with no extension, a computer without internet access, and a form requiring three signatures before anyone could speak to her. Mara admired the efficiency. It saved the school from the exhausting work of hearing people at all.
- ② At noon, the Administrative Innovation Committee unveiled its solution: a Week of Listening. Students could submit concerns through a portal that opened only during the thirty-minute lunch period, provided they first selected one of five approved emotions. Anger was unavailable, presumably because it lacked school spirit. The committee promised to review every message after the spring musical, final exams, and graduation. In the auditorium, a banner read, "Your feedback shapes tomorrow." Mara noted that tomorrow, in this building, seemed to be a distant and carefully guarded country. She applauded with the others. It was safer than asking whether the portal counted suggestions as well as it counted character.
- ③ By June, Mara's office had produced a glossy report titled Listening Achieved. It listed 1,246 "interactions," a number that included automated receipt emails and the principal's own welcome message. The late bus remained canceled, but the report praised students for developing independence through "alternative transportation thinking." When a sophomore asked Mara whether anyone had read the complaints, she replied, "Absolutely. Their silence has been deeply reviewed." The sophomore stared at the locked office door. Mara added that the program had caused a minor inconvenience: students had learned exactly how much their voices weighed. Outside, the new plaque gleamed in the sun.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 In paragraph 1, what does Mara directly say about the school's "efficiency," and what does she imply about the school's real goal?

2 What practice does the Week of Listening satirize? Use two details from paragraph 2 to support your answer.

3 Explain Mara's sarcasm in the line, "Their silence has been deeply reviewed." What is directly stated, and what is implied?

4 Why is Mara's phrase "a minor inconvenience" an understatement in paragraph 3? What larger problem does it reveal?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 3-4 sentence scene about an institution that claims to help people but does not. Use two techniques from this sheet, and after each technique add a bracket that names the technique and explains what it implies.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline phrases whose literal meaning differs from their implied meaning, then write S for satire, SC for sarcasm, I for irony, or U for understatement beside each one. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does Mara directly say about the school's "efficiency," and what does she imply about the school's real goal?	She directly calls the system efficient. She implies that its procedures are designed to keep the school from hearing students' views.
2	What practice does the Week of Listening satirize? Use two details from paragraph 2 to support your answer.	It satirizes institutions that claim to seek feedback while controlling or delaying it. Students can use the portal only during lunch, must choose approved emotions, and will not receive review until after several major events.
3	Explain Mara's sarcasm in the line, "Their silence has been deeply reviewed." What is directly stated, and what is implied?	She directly says that the students' silence was reviewed. She implies that the complaints were ignored and that the school has offered no meaningful response.
4	Why is Mara's phrase "a minor inconvenience" an understatement in paragraph 3? What larger problem does it reveal?	Losing influence over school decisions is far more serious than a minor inconvenience. The understatement reveals that students have learned their voices carry little weight.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The city opened a "rapid response" desk that accepted reports only by mail, in triplicate [satire, implying that bureaucracy delays help]. When Leo asked when his flooded street would be repaired, the clerk said, "Soon. We measure urgency by the calendar, not the water" [sarcasm, implying that no prompt repair is planned]. He carried his dry forms home through knee-high water.

Accept equivalent explanations that distinguish the literal statement from a supported implied meaning. For the open response, accept any plausible institution and situation if the student uses two techniques accurately and explains each implication.