Maps and Promises

Trace a narrator's viewpoint through the systems shaping a neighborhood.

12.RL.3.C "Analyze how authors' attitudes, viewpoints, and beliefs reflect larger historical, social, or cultural contexts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words or phrases that reveal the narrator's attitude toward housing, development, or official institutions. Number three details that show the historical or social conditions influencing that attitude.

The Lines on the Map

(1) In 1951, my father unfolded the newspaper at our kitchen table and pointed to an advertisement for a new subdivision beyond the city limits. The houses looked identical, each with a small lawn and a garage, but the promise beneath the drawing did not feel meant for us. Father had returned from the war with a steady job at the rail yard. Still, the bank officer had already told him that our neighborhood was "risky," though its porches were swept and its children walked to school each morning. I began to distrust drawings that showed only sunny windows.

(2) At school, our civics book praised the new highways as routes to freedom. I could see their concrete ramps from the bus, rising above the blocks where shops had stood the year before. Adults called the construction progress, yet Mrs. Alvarez, who ran the bakery, stood outside her boarded window holding a petition. My mother said the city planned most carefully for people whose complaints would be heard. Her words made me notice who appeared in newspaper photographs: officials with scissors, not the tenants carrying boxes. The celebration around me seemed rehearsed, while the losses were treated as private accidents.

(3) By the decade's end, I understood that the map on the loan officer's desk was not merely paper. Lines drawn years earlier separated neighborhoods into colors and helped decide where banks invested, where landlords repaired, and which families could move. My father kept the rejection letter in a drawer, perhaps because throwing it away would have suggested that its judgment was reasonable. I did not believe our block was dangerous or broken. I believed powerful institutions had described it that way, then used their own description to limit its future. That belief sharpened my anger, but it also taught me to question official language.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the narrator's attitude toward the subdivision advertisement and the bank officer's description of the neighborhood? Use one detail from paragraph 1.

2. What larger housing and lending context does the narrator connect to the map on the loan officer's desk?

3. How does the narrator's view of the highway project differ from the view presented by adults, textbooks, or officials? Use evidence from paragraph 2.

4. What belief about powerful institutions does the narrator develop by the end of the passage, and how does that belief reflect the social context?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a two-sentence journal entry from the viewpoint of a resident watching a public project change the neighborhood. Reveal the resident's attitude and show how unequal power shapes that attitude.

ANSWER KEY

Maps and Promises

GRADE 12 · 12.RL.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline words or phrases that reveal the narrator's attitude toward housing, development, or official institutions. Number three details that show the historical or social conditions influencing that attitude. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the narrator's attitude toward the subdivision advertisement and the bank officer's description of the neighborhood? Use one detail from paragraph 1.	**The narrator distrusts both messages. The advertisement's sunny drawing feels as if its promise is not meant for the family, and the bank calls a clean, active neighborhood "risky."**
2	What larger housing and lending context does the narrator connect to the map on the loan officer's desk?	**The narrator connects the map to a system in which colored neighborhood lines influence bank investment, repairs, and which families can move.**
3	How does the narrator's view of the highway project differ from the view presented by adults, textbooks, or officials? Use evidence from paragraph 2.	**Adults, the civics book, and officials present the highways as freedom or progress. The narrator sees businesses displaced, tenants carrying boxes, and losses ignored.**
4	What belief about powerful institutions does the narrator develop by the end of the passage, and how does that belief reflect the social context?	**The narrator believes institutions can label a neighborhood negatively and then use that label to restrict its future. This reflects a context in which banks, landlords, and city planners hold power over housing and development.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I watched the officials cut their ribbon while our bakery sign disappeared beneath dust. Their ceremony showed me that the city valued public praise over the people whose work and homes stood in its way.

Accept responses that identify an attitude or belief and connect it to a specific historical, social, or cultural condition in the passage. For the journal entry, accept varied viewpoints if both the attitude and the unequal power relationship are clear.