# Tide and Departure

Trace character conflict, structure, and a theme of leaving.

**12.RL** "The student will use textual evidence to demonstrate comprehension and build knowledge from a variety of grade-level complex literary texts read to include literary nonfiction (including world, British and American literature), narratives..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two details that reveal Mr. Vale's conflicting motivations, circle images of sea or weather, and number three moments that build tension before Mara boards the train.

### The Harbor Train

1 At dusk, Mara stood on the sea wall outside her father's shuttered boat shed, holding the letter that offered her a place at the London conservatory. The tide worried the stones below, patient as a creditor. Inside, Mr. Vale sorted the nets he could no longer cast alone. He had sold Mara's violin years earlier to keep the boat, yet he had secretly paid the application fee from his winter savings. When he saw the letter, he asked whether London had enough fog to hide a daughter who abandoned her family. Mara slipped the envelope into her coat and said nothing.

2 Before dawn, Mara carried a lantern to the harbor and found the old skiff half loose at its mooring. She could have left it for the tide, as her father's barbed question seemed to invite, but she knelt in the rain and retied the frayed rope. The knot recalled another morning, twelve years before, when her mother had shown her how to fasten it, then hurried home to practice scales beside the stove. Mara's hands shook, not from cold alone. A train left at eight. From the shed, a hammer struck once, paused, and struck again, as if someone were building a wall or signaling across water.

3 At the station, Mr. Vale appeared without his coat. He set Mara's violin case on the bench, its brass latch polished, though the instrument inside was the cheaper one he had found in a pawnshop. "Your mother hated the sea," he said, looking toward the gray tracks. "It always took something." Mara understood that he meant more than her mother, who had died during a winter storm. The train's whistle cut through the gulls. Mr. Vale turned away before Mara could thank him, and she boarded carrying both the violin and the knowledge that leaving was not the same as being cast off.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

**1** What two details show that Mr. Vale has conflicting feelings about Mara's departure? Explain what each detail suggests.

**2** How does the memory of Mara's mother create a parallel with Mara's actions at the harbor? What effect does this structure have on the conflict?

**3** How does the comparison of the tide to "a creditor" shape the mood at the beginning of the passage?

**4** How does the final sentence develop the theme that leaving can be different from rejection? Use one earlier detail and one final-paragraph detail.

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly four sentences about a character preparing to leave. Show the character's conflicting motivations through dialogue and action, and use the same nature image in the first and fourth sentences to develop a theme about leaving or belonging.

ANSWER KEY

# Tide and Departure

GRADE 12 · 12.RL

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that reveal Mr. Vale's conflicting motivations, circle images of sea or weather, and number three moments that build tension before Mara boards the train. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What two details show that Mr. Vale has conflicting feelings about Mara's departure? Explain what each detail suggests. | **His question about a daughter who "abandoned" her family suggests hurt and resentment. Paying Mara's application fee and bringing her a violin case suggest that he wants her to pursue music.** |
| 2 | How does the memory of Mara's mother create a parallel with Mara's actions at the harbor? What effect does this structure have on the conflict? | **Mara reties the skiff's rope as her mother once taught her, while the memory also connects the mother to music practice. The parallel links Mara's family duty to her musical future, making her choice more tense.** |
| 3 | How does the comparison of the tide to "a creditor" shape the mood at the beginning of the passage? | **The comparison makes the tide seem patient but demanding, creating an uneasy mood of debt, pressure, and unavoidable loss.** |
| 4 | How does the final sentence develop the theme that leaving can be different from rejection? Use one earlier detail and one final-paragraph detail. | **Earlier, Mara fears that leaving means abandoning her father because of his accusation. In the final paragraph, his gift of the violin case shows care, so Mara understands that departure does not mean he has cast her off.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Rain tapped the apartment window as Imani folded her brother's maps beside the door. "Go before the road floods," she said, although she had hidden his bus ticket in her pocket all morning. When he looked away, she placed the ticket beneath his passport and tightened the strap on his bag. As rain cleared from the glass, Imani saw that love could hold on and still make room for departure.

Accept equivalent evidence-based explanations of Mr. Vale's conflict, the flashback's parallel structure, and the sea imagery's uneasy mood. For Part 3, accept varied situations if the response has exactly four sentences, includes dialogue, action showing conflict, and repeats a nature image in sentences one and four.