Warnings by Water

Interpret figurative language and classical allusions in a civic debate.

12.RV.1.F "Interpret the meaning of figurative language and literary and classical allusions and analyze their role in texts."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three phrases that use comparison or give nonhuman things human actions, and circle the two classical allusions. Beside each mark, write one or two words about what it suggests and how it shapes the scene.

The Harbor Vote

1 At the harbor town's council meeting, Mara Bell placed a jar of gray sand beside the microphone. “This is what the playground will hold after the next major tide,” she said. The river had become a creditor, and each season it sent the town another bill. Several council members studied the budget instead of the jar. Mara continued, listing elevations, insurance losses, and the cost of moving the playground. From the back row, a fisherman muttered that she was Cassandra at public meetings again. No one answered him, but the room grew still when rain tapped the windows.

2 Then developer Leon Voss unfolded drawings for a waterfront market, promising new jobs and a promenade along the same low ground. His renderings showed cafés bright as lanterns and children on dry stone. The proposal moved through the room like a warm current. Before the vote, the council chair asked members to seal their phones in a wooden box and spend ten quiet minutes with Mara's maps. “Odysseus had a plan for listening,” she said. “Tonight, we can make one too.” Outside, a delivery truck splashed through a puddle that reached the curb.

3 The vote was postponed until spring. Afterward, Mara carried the jar to the playground. A boy watching from a swing asked whether the council believed her. She looked toward the seawall, where gulls balanced against the wind. “Belief is not the only thing that moves a town,” she said. The empty swings clicked together like small metronomes, measuring a future no one had scheduled. Mara tipped the sand back into its jar and walked home beneath clouds gathering over the bay. Behind her, the council chamber lights went out one by one.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the statement that the river has become “a creditor” that sends the town “another bill” suggest about the river's effect on the town?

2. What does the fisherman's Cassandra allusion imply about Mara's role at the meetings? Use details from the paragraph to support your interpretation.

3. Based on the chair's actions with the phones and maps, what idea connected to Odysseus does her allusion invoke?

4. How do the creditor metaphor and the two classical allusions together shape the passage's portrayal of the council's decision?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence analysis of one figurative comparison and one classical allusion in the passage. Explain how the two devices work together to shape the mood or the reader's view of the council's choice.

ANSWER KEY

Warnings by Water

GRADE 12 · 12.RV.1.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three phrases that use comparison or give nonhuman things human actions, and circle the two classical allusions. Beside each mark, write one or two words about what it suggests and how it shapes the scene. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the statement that the river has become “a creditor” that sends the town “another bill” suggest about the river's effect on the town?	**The river's flooding creates repeated, costly obligations for the town, as if the town owes payment for the damage.**
2	What does the fisherman's Cassandra allusion imply about Mara's role at the meetings? Use details from the paragraph to support your interpretation.	**It implies that Mara gives warnings about danger that people may ignore or refuse to believe. Council members focus on the budget rather than the jar and her evidence.**
3	Based on the chair's actions with the phones and maps, what idea connected to Odysseus does her allusion invoke?	**It invokes using deliberate limits or a plan to resist distracting, appealing influences and attend carefully to important information.**
4	How do the creditor metaphor and the two classical allusions together shape the passage's portrayal of the council's decision?	**They portray the decision as urgent and consequential. The metaphor makes flooding seem like an accumulating debt, while the allusions contrast an overlooked warning with a disciplined effort to consider it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The proposal moves “like a warm current,” making Leon's presentation seem pleasant and easy to follow even as it carries the council toward risk. The Cassandra reference casts Mara as a speaker whose accurate warning may be dismissed, while the current image shows why dismissal is appealing. Together, the devices create a tense mood in which attractive appearances compete with difficult evidence.

Accept equivalent interpretations supported by details from the passage, especially those connecting the flood threat, Mara's warning, and the council's decision-making. For Part 3, accept any accurate figurative comparison and either allusion if the response explains their combined role in the text.