Whispers Below

Analyze how word choice, sound, and dialogue shape suspense.

7.RL.2.A "Analyze how elements of authors' styles (e.g., word choice, dialogue, form, voice, rhyme, rhythm, and/or sound devices) contribute to meaning in various forms of prose and poetry."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three descriptive word choices or sound phrases that build a quiet, mysterious mood. Circle each line of dialogue, then notice what it reveals about the characters.

The Green Door

1 Rain tapped the library windows, quick and impatient, while I shelved returns after school. The building was usually loud with whispers, chair legs, and the beep of the scanner, but that afternoon it held its breath. In the back room, a cardboard box waited beneath a table. Across its lid, someone had written, "For the reader who stays." I should have called Ms. Ortiz. Instead, I brushed away dust and lifted the lid carefully, listening for footsteps.

2 Inside lay a thin notebook tied with blue string. Its first page showed a map of the library, drawn in dark, slanting lines. A dotted trail curled from the atlas shelf to the basement stairs. "That is not a staff map," Ms. Ortiz said behind me. I jumped so hard the notebook slapped shut. She did not scold. Her voice was low, almost curious. "Some stories," she said, "want to be found before they can be told."

3 Ms. Ortiz carried the notebook downstairs, and I followed the trail of her flashlight. The basement smelled of stone and old paper. At the last step, the beam caught a small green door I had never noticed. Knock, knock, knock, went the pipes overhead. Ms. Ortiz smiled, but her hand paused above the handle. "You may turn back," she said. I thought of the box, the waiting words, and the rain drumming the windows. "Not yet," I answered.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the phrase “it held its breath” affect the way you picture the library?

2. How do the phrases “quick and impatient” and “Knock, knock, knock” use sound to affect the scene?

3. What does Ms. Ortiz’s line, “Some stories… want to be found,” reveal about her? How does it add to the passage’s meaning?

4. Why might the author end the passage with the narrator’s short reply, “Not yet”?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence continuation of the scene. Include one sound phrase and one line of dialogue that create mystery, then explain in your final sentence how those choices affect the mood.

Whispers Below

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three descriptive word choices or sound phrases that build a quiet, mysterious mood. Circle each line of dialogue, then notice what it reveals about the characters. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the phrase "it held its breath" affect the way you picture the library?	**It makes the library seem unusually silent and tense, as if something important or mysterious is about to happen.**
2	How do the phrases "quick and impatient" and "Knock, knock, knock" use sound to affect the scene?	**They make the setting seem active and uneasy, which builds suspense.**
3	What does Ms. Ortiz's line, "Some stories... want to be found," reveal about her? How does it add to the passage's meaning?	**It shows that she is curious and sees the mystery as an invitation to discover something. It supports the idea that stories can be uncovered through curiosity.**
4	Why might the author end the passage with the narrator's short reply, "Not yet"?	**The short reply shows the narrator chooses to continue and leaves the reader wondering what is behind the door.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The green door opened onto a narrow hall lined with brass nameplates. Drip, drip, drip, echoed somewhere beyond the dark. "Do you hear that?" I whispered, stepping closer to a nameplate marked LENA VALE. A warm light flickered under the last door. The sound words and quiet dialogue make the hall feel uncertain and mysterious.

Accept supported explanations that connect specific word choice, sound, or dialogue to suspense, character, or meaning. For Part 3, accept varied continuations if they include the required sound phrase, dialogue, and accurate explanation of mood.