

Voices Beyond the Stage

Track how dramatic conventions reveal conflict and build theme.

9.RL.1.D "Identify and describe how dramatic conventions (e.g., soliloquy, aside, narration, direct address to the audience) contribute to the theme and effect of plays from various cultures."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each aside, soliloquy, narration, or direct address to the audience. In the margin, write one or two words explaining the effect of each convention, such as "reveals guilt" or "involves audience."

The Empty Bowl

- ① **NARRATOR:** In a coastal town in Ghana, a family has gathered at dusk during Homowo, a festival observed by Ga communities. Ama enters the courtyard carrying an empty clay bowl. Her older brother, Kojo, has sold the family's last bag of maize without telling her. **AMA:** The bowl feels lighter than my promise to Mother. [She faces the audience.] You have carried a secret before, have you not? Tell me, does silence protect a family, or does it make hunger grow? **KOJO** enters, smiling too quickly. **AMA [aside]:** His smile is a locked door. I must find the key before the drums begin.
- ② **KOJO:** Sister, the trader needed help, and I needed coin. I thought tomorrow would bring more grain. **AMA:** Tomorrow cannot feed tonight. [Kojo turns away.] **KOJO [soliloquy]:** I wanted to be the son who solves every problem. Instead, I traded food for a few bright coins, and now each coin burns my palm. **NARRATOR:** Beyond the courtyard, neighbors gather. Their festival songs remind the family that survival depends on shared stores and honest hands. **AMA [aside]:** He is ashamed. If I expose him, the crowd may punish him. If I hide this, Mother will still be hungry. [She lifts the bowl.] The drums are calling us to choose.
- ③ **AMA:** Kojo, bring the coins to the elders. Ask whether the trader will return the maize. **KOJO:** And if he refuses? **AMA:** Then we will tell the truth and ask our neighbors to share what they can. [She faces the audience.] When a mistake harms others, what repairs it first, pride or responsibility? **KOJO** places the coins in the bowl. **NARRATOR:** The bowl is still empty, but it no longer stands alone. As the drums begin, Kojo walks toward the elders, while Ama follows. The scene ends with the family choosing honesty over the appearance of strength.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How does Ama's first direct address to the audience introduce the conflict and involve the audience?

2 What does Kojo's soliloquy reveal that he does not say directly to Ama? How does this affect the theme?

3 How does the narrator's description of the neighbors and festival songs shape the effect of the scene?

4 Compare Ama's aside in the second paragraph with her direct address in the final paragraph. How does each convention move her toward a decision?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a six-to-eight-line mini-scene set during a community gathering. Use and label at least two dramatic conventions, such as an aside, soliloquy, narration, or direct address to the audience, then write exactly two sentences explaining how the conventions develop a theme.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each aside, soliloquy, narration, or direct address to the audience. In the margin, write one or two words explaining the effect of each convention, such as “reveals guilt” or “involves audience.” Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Ama's first direct address to the audience introduce the conflict and involve the audience?	It makes the audience consider whether keeping a secret protects or harms a family, introducing Ama's conflict over Kojo's hidden action.
2	What does Kojo's soliloquy reveal that he does not say directly to Ama? How does this affect the theme?	It reveals his guilt and his wish to solve problems for the family. It supports the theme that good intentions do not erase the harm caused by dishonesty.
3	How does the narrator's description of the neighbors and festival songs shape the effect of the scene?	It places the family's problem within a caring community and emphasizes that survival depends on sharing and honesty.
4	Compare Ama's aside in the second paragraph with her direct address in the final paragraph. How does each convention move her toward a decision?	The aside shows her private worry about exposing or protecting Kojo. The final direct address frames responsibility as the better choice and prepares the audience for her decision to tell the truth.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

NARRATOR: At the neighborhood seed exchange, Lila sets an empty packet on the table. LILA [aside]: I borrowed seeds last spring and never returned any. MARCUS: Everyone needs something this year. LILA [direct address]: Would you trust a neighbor who hides a mistake? LILA: I will tell the group and offer my time in the garden. NARRATOR: The gardeners make space beside the seed trays. The aside reveals Lila's private guilt, while the direct address asks the audience to judge her choice. Together, these conventions develop the theme that trust grows when people admit harm and help repair it.

Accept answers that accurately identify a convention and connect it to a specific effect or theme supported by the scene. For the open task, accept different settings and themes when the labeled conventions clearly shape the audience's understanding of character, conflict, or message.