Rain on the Rooftop

Track how language turns a small task into a meaningful moment.

9.RL.2.B "Explain how an author's specific word choices, syntax, tone, and voice shape the meaning of the text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three words or phrases that create a strong image, and circle two sentences whose length or structure stands out. In the margin, write one tone word for each paragraph and number the detail that helped you choose it.

The Roof Garden

1 At 5:40, Mara stepped onto the school roof with a watering can bumping her knee. Below her, buses sighed at the curb, and the football field gleamed under a thin wash of rain. The garden beds looked defeated: basil stalks leaned sideways, tomato vines dragged their leaves through mud, and one bright marigold nodded in a cracked pot. Mara had promised to water before the storm, but her shift at the bakery had run late. Now the clouds crowded above the city, dark and impatient.

2 She filled the can from a spigot that coughed brown water, then moved from bed to bed. Pour. Wait. Pour. Wait. Each stream vanished into the thirsty soil before it could shine. Wind snapped the loose tarp against the railing. Mara tied it down, once, twice, three times, although her fingers stung from the cold. When the first hard drop struck her wrist, she laughed. The sound surprised her. She was late, wet, and alone, yet the roof no longer seemed like a punishment. It felt like a small country she had defended.

3 By the time the rain opened fully, Mara had emptied every can and checked every tie. Water tapped the leaves with quick, silver fingers. The basil lifted its bruised heads. The tomato vines, which had seemed heavy and hopeless an hour earlier, trembled and held. Mara stood beneath the doorway, breathing the sharp green smell of wet soil. Her apron was smeared with mud, her shoes made squishing noises, and the bakery would expect her at dawn. Still, she left the roof slowly, carrying the cracked pot downstairs so the marigold could have a safer window.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the words “defeated,” “dragged,” and “cracked” shape the meaning of the first paragraph?

2. What is the effect of the short sentences “Pour. Wait. Pour. Wait.” in paragraph 2?

3. How does the tone change from the beginning to the end of paragraph 2? Use one detail from the paragraph in your explanation.

4. What kind of narrator's voice is created by phrases such as “buses sighed,” “clouds crowded,” and “water tapped the leaves with quick, silver fingers”?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly three sentences about a person caring for something damaged. Include one intentionally short sentence and at least one vivid verb or personification. In your third sentence, name the tone and voice you aimed for and explain how one language choice creates them.

ANSWER KEY

Rain on the Rooftop

GRADE 9 · 9.RL.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three words or phrases that create a strong image, and circle two sentences whose length or structure stands out. In the margin, write one tone word for each paragraph and number the detail that helped you choose it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the words “defeated,” “dragged,” and “cracked” shape the meaning of the first paragraph?	**They make the garden seem damaged and vulnerable, which creates urgency for Mara's work.**
2	What is the effect of the short sentences “Pour. Wait. Pour. Wait.” in paragraph 2?	**Their clipped, repeated structure slows the moment and emphasizes Mara's steady, repetitive labor.**
3	How does the tone change from the beginning to the end of paragraph 2? Use one detail from the paragraph in your explanation.	**The tone shifts from pressured and uncomfortable to proud and determined. Although Mara is “late, wet, and alone,” the roof becomes “a small country she had defended.”**
4	What kind of narrator's voice is created by phrases such as “buses sighed,” “clouds crowded,” and “water tapped the leaves with quick, silver fingers”?	**The voice is observant and sympathetic. Personification makes the setting seem alive and makes Mara's care for it feel important.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Jalen pressed the loose bike chain back onto its gear as rain ticked against the garage door. Click. I aimed for a patient, observant tone and voice, and the quiet verb “pressed” shows that Jalen works carefully rather than angrily.

Accept reasonable tone words when students support them with accurate language from the passage. For the open task, check for exactly three sentences, a short sentence, deliberate language, and a clear explanation of tone and voice.