Roadside Voices

Trace how setting gives a camp sheet its purpose.

9.RL.3.A "Describe how the historical or social function of a text depends on its context (e.g., cultural, situational, historical, geographical)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that reveal the historical, social, or geographical setting. Circle details that show what The Roadside Voice does for readers, then draw one line connecting a setting detail to a function detail.

The Roadside Voice

1 On an October evening in 1936, Elena pinned a single-page sheet to the water-truck post at a California farm-labor camp. Her family had left Oklahoma after drought and dust storms ruined crops. Like many migrants, they followed seasonal work west, carrying bedding, cooking pots, and hope in a truck. The sheet, called The Roadside Voice, listed a free clinic's hours, warned that a grower had cut wages, and printed a four-line poem about hands opening cotton bolls. By lantern light, workers gathered to read it before sleeping in tents and cars.

2 Elena did not expect the page to change the weather or create jobs. Its purpose was more immediate: it turned scattered information into something the camp could share. Families often moved when a crop was picked, so news traveled unevenly. By naming a clinic and reporting wages, the sheet helped readers make choices and compare what they had been told. The poem mattered too. Its image of sore hands opening cotton bolls gave exhausted workers a way to see their labor as common rather than private. A neighbor copied the poem into a letter for relatives still in Oklahoma.

3 Because it appeared in a temporary camp during the Depression, The Roadside Voice did more than entertain. In a settled town with telephones, permanent addresses, and regular newspapers, a wage report might have seemed ordinary. Here, the page became a meeting place for people separated from former neighbors and uncertain about the next job. Its small size also fit the geography of travel: Elena could fold copies into a pocket and pass them along the roads between farms. The sheet preserved evidence of hardship while offering a brief sense of connection.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the historical and geographical conditions described in the passage make The Roadside Voice useful? Use two details from the passage.

2. How did the temporary camp setting change the social function of the sheet?

3. Why does the poem about cotton-picking hands matter in this setting, beyond providing information?

4. According to the passage, how might a wage report function differently in a settled town?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label for The Roadside Voice. Explain how its 1936 setting shaped its purpose, and include at least two specific details from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Roadside Voices

GRADE 9 · 9.RL.3.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that reveal the historical, social, or geographical setting. Circle details that show what The Roadside Voice does for readers, then draw one line connecting a setting detail to a function detail. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the historical and geographical conditions described in the passage make The Roadside Voice useful? Use two details from the passage.	**Drought, the Depression, and seasonal farm work had forced families to migrate to California and move often. In temporary camps and along roads between farms, the sheet could carry clinic and wage information to people without stable homes or regular news sources.**
2	How did the temporary camp setting change the social function of the sheet?	**The sheet became a shared meeting place for scattered workers. It helped them exchange information, compare wages, and feel connected to people facing similar conditions.**
3	Why does the poem about cotton-picking hands matter in this setting, beyond providing information?	**The poem helps exhausted workers see their labor as a common experience rather than a private struggle. It creates shared identity among migrant workers.**
4	According to the passage, how might a wage report function differently in a settled town?	**In a settled town with telephones, permanent addresses, and regular newspapers, the wage report might seem like an ordinary notice instead of a central way to share information and connect neighbors.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Set in 1936, The Roadside Voice speaks to migrant farmworkers in California. Workers often moved after crops were picked, so regular news sources could not reliably reach them. Its clinic hours and wage report gave readers useful information, while its poem about cotton-picking hands created a shared identity. Because copies could be folded and carried between farms, the page connected people across a changing landscape.

Accept responses that connect a specific context, such as migration, temporary camps, the Depression, or travel between farms, to a specific function of the sheet. Students may describe the function as sharing practical information, building community, preserving evidence, or giving workers a shared voice.