

Name: _____ Date: _____

Exploring Mood

Mood is the feeling you get from reading a piece of writing. Another way to describe mood is *atmosphere*. When you walk into a place, it has an atmosphere that makes you feel a certain way; when you "walk into" a story, it too has an atmosphere that creates a feeling. Writers create mood through word choice, imagery, dialogue, setting, and plot.

In this activity, you will consider the mood of a passage from "The Flaming Sky" by Lauren Tarshis. Here is the passage, which is from page 9 in the section "Just 32 Seconds":

Werner heard a muffled explosion. He turned to see a nightmarish sight: a wall of fire racing toward him. He started to run, but the nose of the zeppelin jerked up, hurtling him to the floor. He slid back, back, back, straight toward the wide-open jaws of the fire. The heat was unbearable; he felt certain he would burst into flames at any moment.

But then, *splash!*

A shower of water from somewhere above drenched him from head to toe. The water cooled his body and cleared his mind. Werner rose to his feet and staggered away from the fire. Then he saw it: a small door in the side of the ship. With a mighty kick, he bashed open the hatch. He had no idea how far above the ground he was, but he had no choice. Staying on the ship meant certain death.

Werner threw himself through the opening, into the flaming sky.

It took just 32 seconds for the *Hindenburg* to crash to the ground in a burning heap. As it landed, passengers burst through windows and doors.

Of the 97 people on board, 35 lost their lives.

Here are two words that could be used to describe the mood of the passage:

terrifying, urgent

Now let's look at what creates this mood.

Psst! *Urgent* means "needing immediate attention or action."

The Situation

One thing that makes the mood terrifying and urgent is the situation—in other words, what happens.

1. In 1-2 sentences, summarize what Tarshis describes in the passage on the previous page.

Descriptive Details

It's not just the situation that gives the passage a terrifying and urgent mood. The way Tarshis brings the situation to life also helps to create the mood. Let's take a look at some of her descriptive details.

2. **Sentence:** "He turned to see a nightmarish sight: a wall of fire racing toward him."

Check the TWO statements that **best** explain how details in the sentence above create a feeling of terror.

- A. The adjective *nightmarish* creates a feeling of terror because it describes a sense of things being very scary, like in a bad dream.
- B. Tarshis writes that Werner saw the fire when he turned.
- C. When Tarshis describes what Werner saw as a "wall of fire," she creates a terrifying image that creates a sense of fear.

3. **Sentence:** "He started to run, but the nose of the zeppelin jerked up, hurtling him to the floor."

Look at all the verbs in that sentence! Check the TWO statements that **best** explain how Tarshis's use of verbs in this sentence create a mood of either terror or urgency.

- A. When Tarshis writes that Werner "started to run," the reader can feel Werner's panic as he tries to get away from the fire. This helps create a feeling of urgency.
- B. When Tarshis writes that the nose of the zeppelin "jerked up" and "hurtled" Werner to the ground, the reader feels a jolt. These verbs show Werner's helplessness and the violence of the moment, adding to the overall mood of terror.
- C. Tarshis uses three different verbs in this sentence to create a feeling of terror.

4. Sentence: "With a mighty kick, he bashed open the hatch."

Write one statement explaining how this sentence creates a feeling of terror and/or a feeling of urgency.
