Grade 7: Reading Benchmark

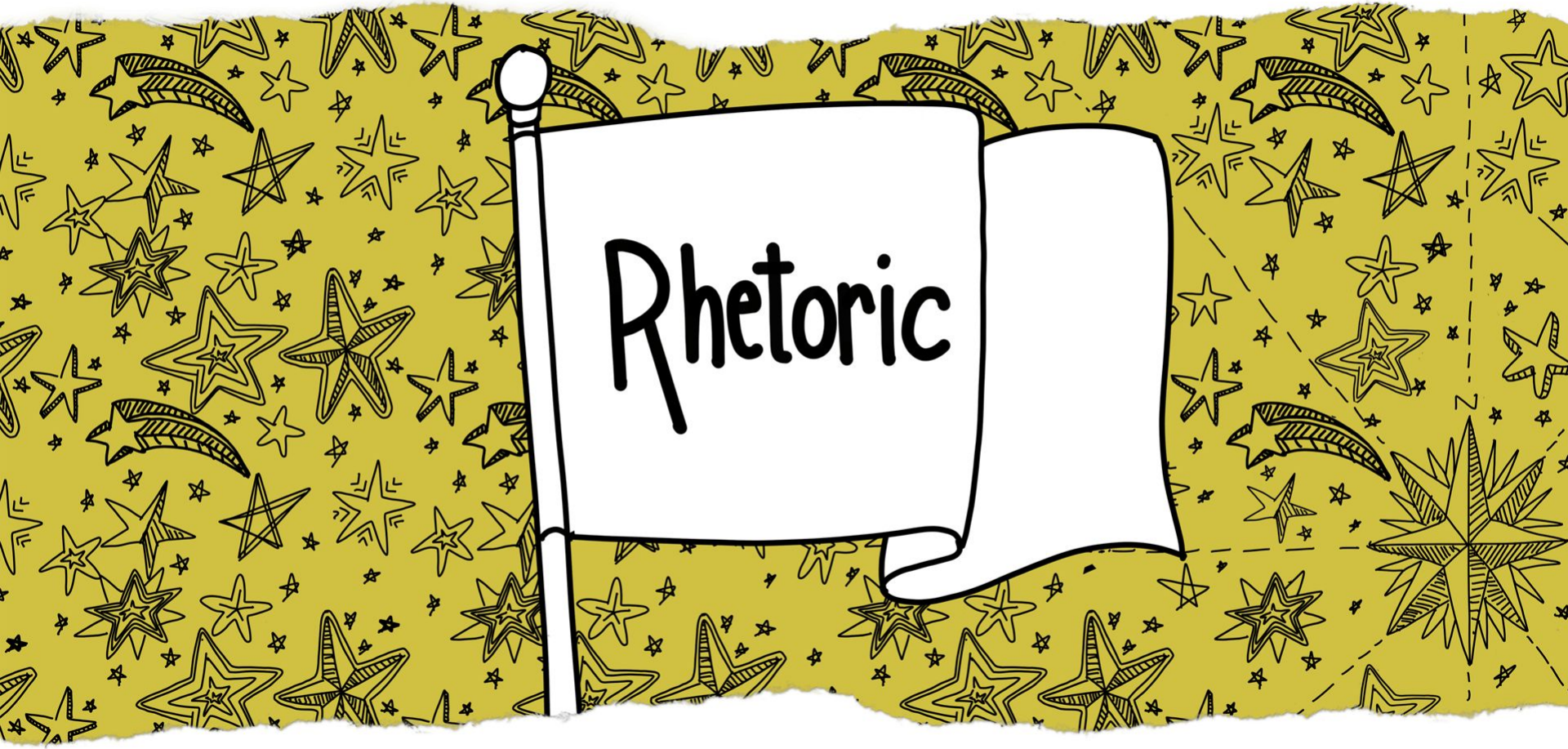
Understanding Rhetoric

7.R.3.4: Explain the meaning and/or significance of rhetorical devices in a text.

© 2021 Amplify Education, Inc.

These materials are provided solely for licensed users of Amplify ELA Florida Edition. Any further reproduction or distribution of this document or its contents is prohibited.

Benchmark Introduction



Benchmark:

Explain what rhetorical devices (such as figurative language) mean or reveal in a text.

Definition of Rhetoric

Rhetoric is the art or skill of speaking or writing formally and effectively, especially as a way to **persuade** or **influence** people.

When an author’s or speaker’s purpose is to persuade, they carefully choose details that will have an effect on the audience.

Definition of Rhetorical Device

A **rhetorical device** is language used in a specific way to have an intended effect on the reader or audience.

Authors and speakers often use rhetorical devices to persuade or to influence the thinking of their audience.

Definition of Figurative Language

Figurative language expresses something other than the literal, or actual, meaning of words.

Figurative language can be used as a rhetorical device.

Example of how figurative language can function as a rhetorical device

Walter in *A Raisin in the Sun* exclaims, “Man, I’m a volcano. Bitter? Here I am a giant—surrounded by ants! Ants who can’t even understand what it is the giant is talking about.”
(Act II, Scene One, 103)

- Walter uses a **metaphor** to compare himself first to a volcano, and then to a giant among ants. His purpose is to **persuade** his listeners that he is powerful and underappreciated.

Definition of Rhetorical Question

Another type of rhetorical device is the **rhetorical question**.

A rhetorical question is a question that the author or speaker asks their reader or audience in order to emphasize a point or to have an effect.

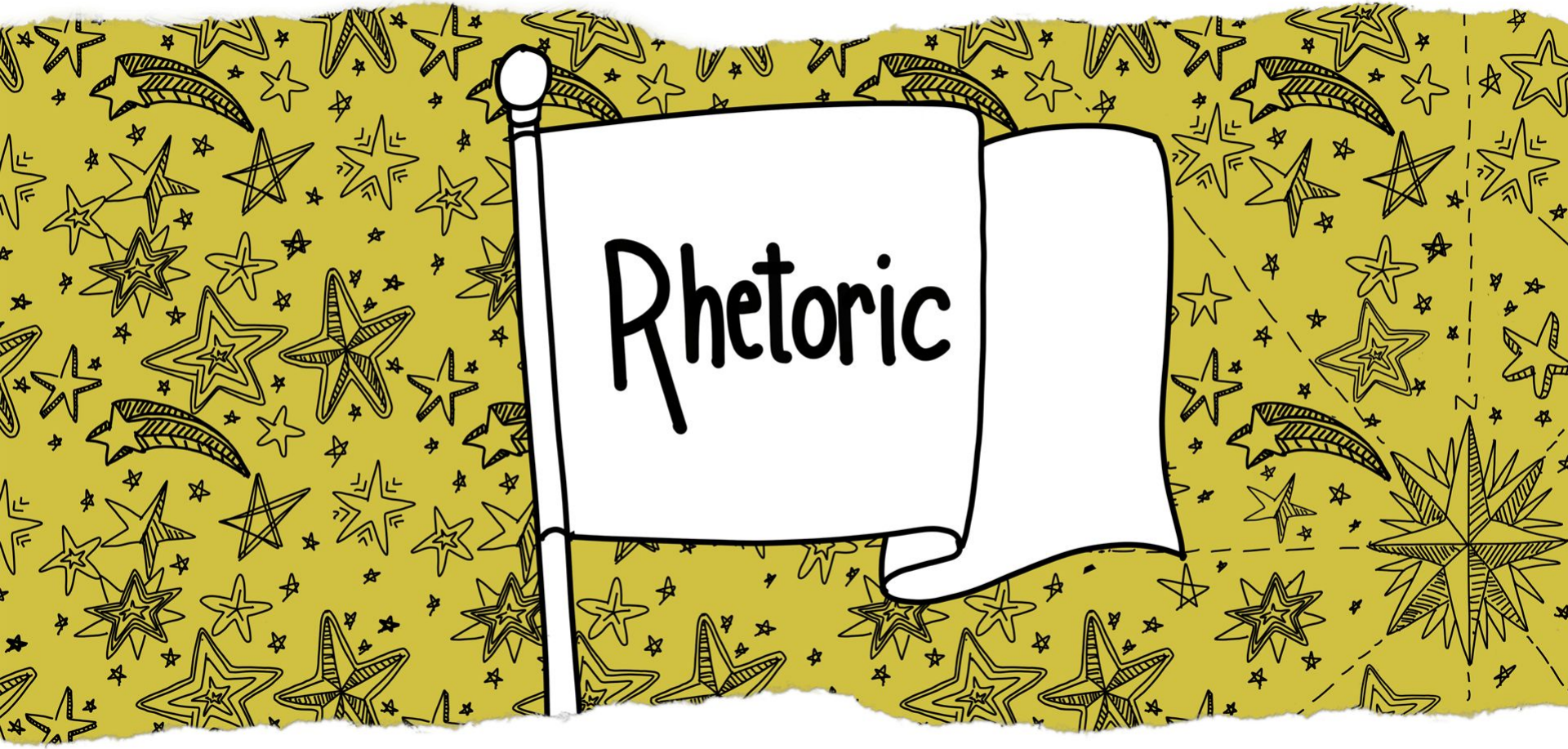
Sometimes an answer to a rhetorical question is given in a text, but often the reader is left to supply the answer in their own mind.

Example of how a rhetorical question can function as a rhetorical device

At the beginning of “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the narrator asks the reader, “True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?”

- The narrator uses a **rhetorical question** to emphasize the fact that he is not mad. He does not expect an answer; he asks the question to **persuade** his audience that it would be absurd to say he is mad.

Benchmark Skill Routine



How to explain the meaning or significance of rhetorical devices

Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used to persuade the audience.

Notice:

- Figurative language
- Rhetorical questions
- Other language that is used persuasively

How to explain the meaning or significance of rhetorical devices

Ask yourself: How are the author's choices meant to affect readers? What does the author want readers...

- to picture?
- to feel?
- to think about?

How to explain the meaning or significance of rhetorical devices

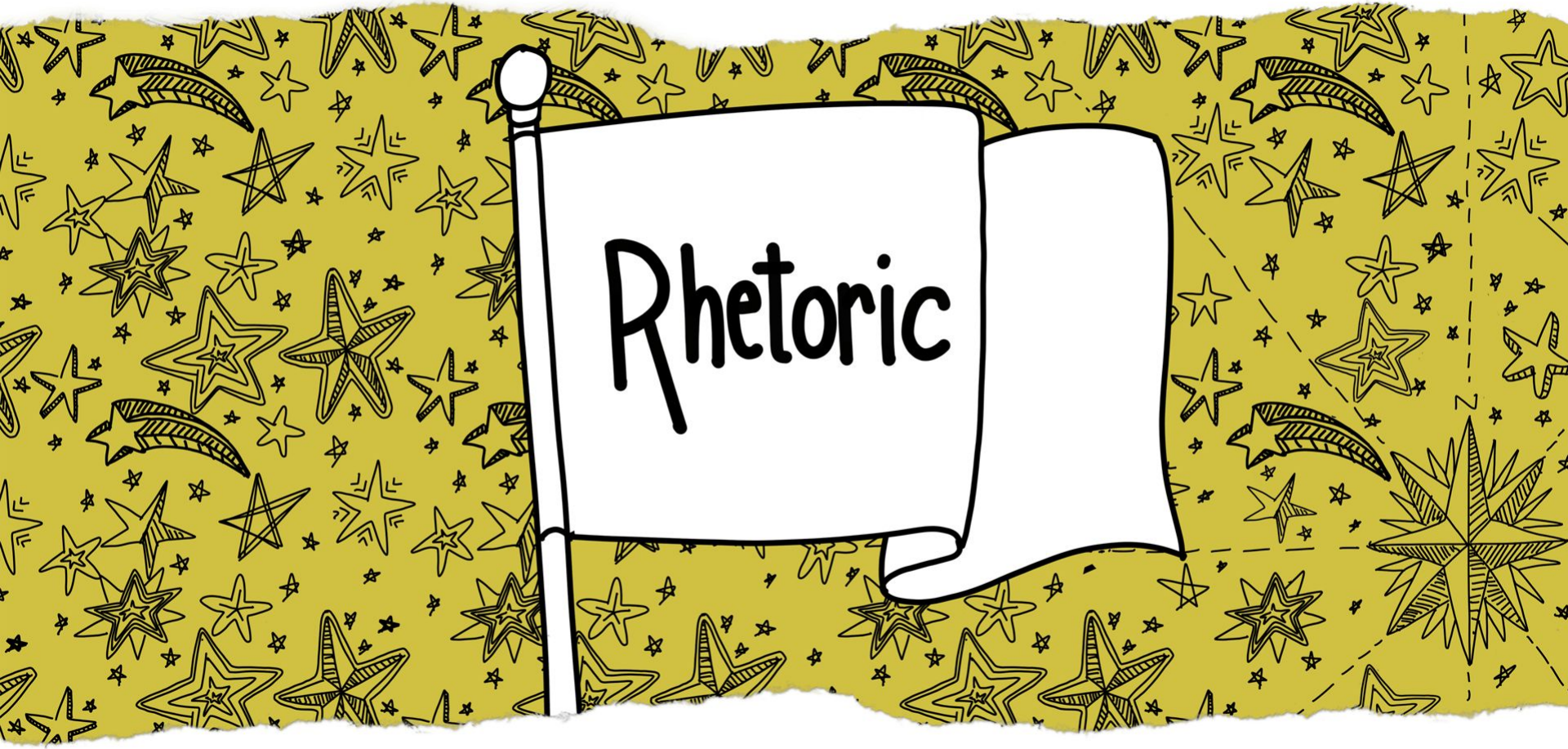
Explain how the author uses rhetorical devices to convey meaning or significance.

- What does the author want readers to understand?
- How does the author’s use of rhetorical devices convey that meaning or significance?

Remember

1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used to persuade readers.
2. Consider how the author’s choices are meant to affect readers.
3. Explain how the author uses rhetorical devices to convey meaning or significance.

Benchmark in Action: Example of how to explain the meaning of rhetorical devices



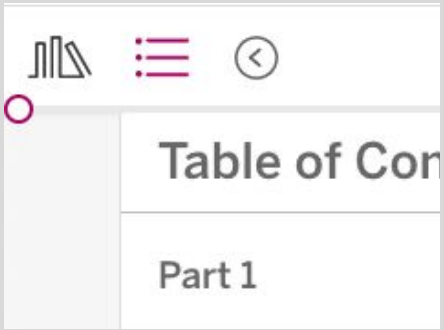
Get ready to read two passages in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* by Frederick Douglass.



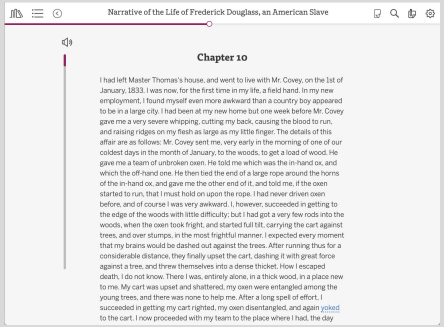
1. Open the Library app.



2. Type “Frederick Douglass” into the search bar. Click on the title of the book to open it.



3. Click on the Table of Contents.



4. Find and go to Chapter 10. Read paragraphs 6 and 7.

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Context for Passage 1

Frederick Douglass was a formerly enslaved person who wrote and published his memoir after escaping to freedom. One of the purposes for Douglass's book was to inform white Americans about the experiences of enslaved people and persuade them to join the movement to abolish slavery.

In Passage 1, Douglass describes his state of mind while living on a plantation under the power of a harsh overseer named Covey. He narrates how he felt watching ships sail by on the Chesapeake Bay.

Read *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Chapter 10, paragraphs 6 and 7.

As you read...

- look for details that are used to persuade readers.
- consider how the author's choices are meant to affect readers.
- think about how the author uses rhetorical devices to convey meaning or significance.

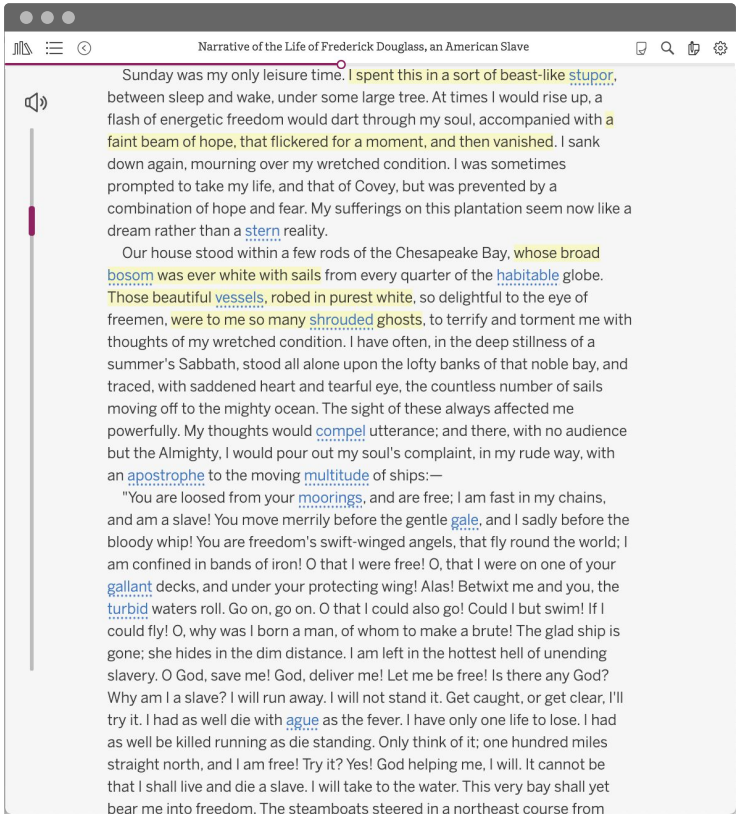
Practice Step 1

Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used to persuade readers.

Notice:

- Figurative language
- Rhetorical questions
- Other language that is used persuasively

Practice Step 1



Highlight key details of the author's description.

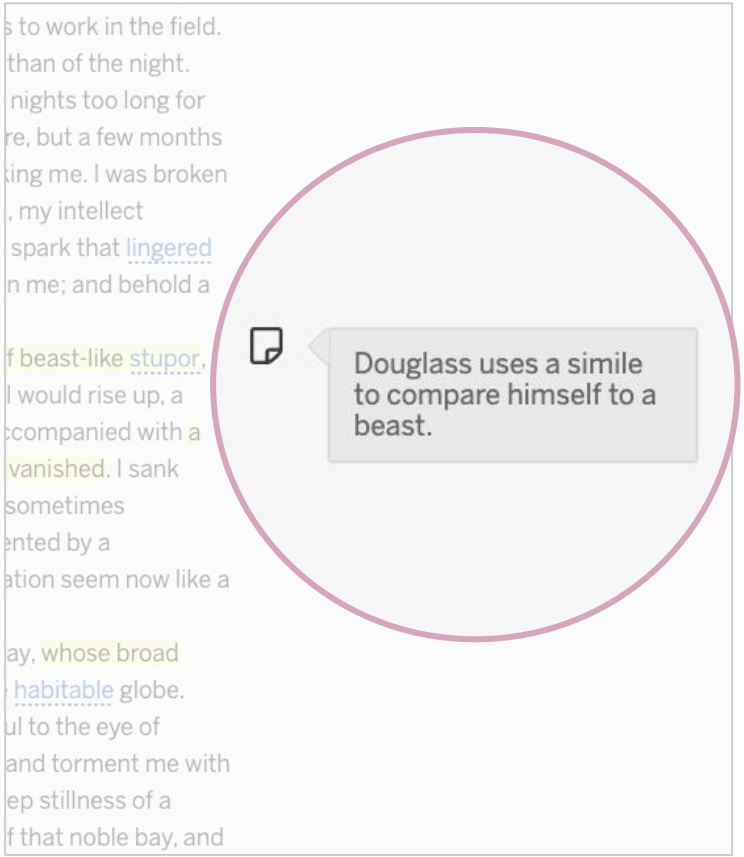
"I spent this in a sort of beast-like stupor"

"a faint beam of hope, that flickered for a moment, and then vanished"

"whose broad bosom was ever white with sails"

"Those beautiful vessels, robed in purest white...were to me so many shrouded ghosts"

Practice Step 1



Annotate to identify the type of detail.

- "I spent this in a sort of beast-like stupor"
  Douglass uses a **simile** to compare himself to a beast.
- "a faint beam of hope, that flickered for a moment, and then vanished"
  Douglass uses a **metaphor** to compare the feeling of hope to a light that can turn on and off.
- "whose broad bosom was ever white with sails,";
  "Those beautiful vessels, robed in purest white"
  Douglass uses **personification** to compare the bay and its ships to a woman wearing white.
- "were to me so many shrouded ghosts"
  Douglass uses a **metaphor** to compare the ships to ghosts.

Practice Step 2

Ask yourself: How are the author's choices meant to affect readers? What does the author want readers...

- to picture?
- to feel?
- to think about?

Practice Step 2 Examples:

- Douglass's figurative language shows readers that being enslaved made him feel like a "beast."
- It creates sympathy for the way hope felt like a "faint beam" that "flickered...and then vanished."
- It allows readers to sense the conflicting feelings of inspiration and frustration that Douglass felt while watching the ships sail past.

Practice Step 3

Explain how the author uses rhetorical devices to convey meaning or significance.

- What does the author want readers to understand?
- How does the author’s use of rhetorical devices convey that meaning or significance?

Practice Step 3 Examples:

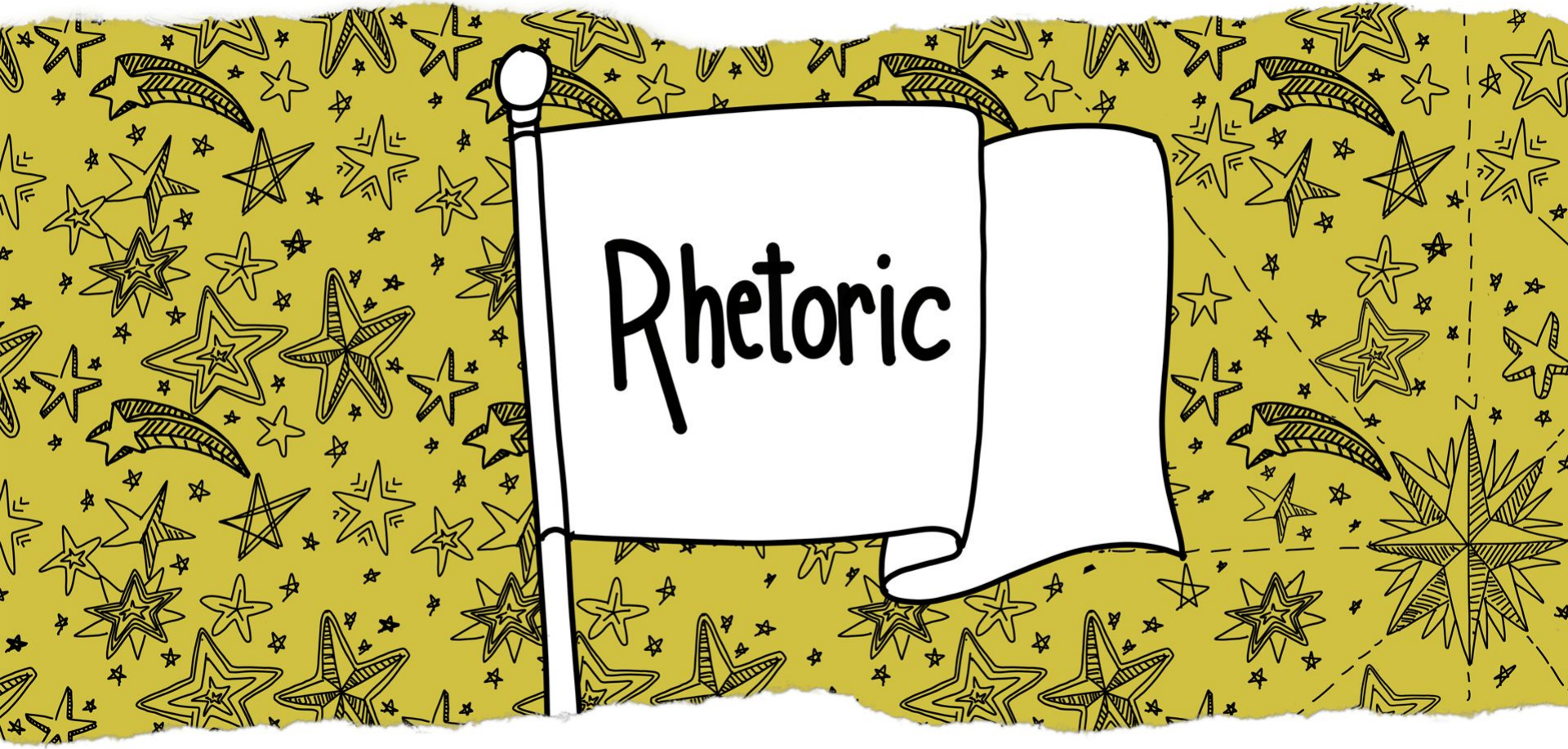
Douglass uses figurative language to communicate the pain and frustration that he experienced as an enslaved person who could imagine, but not have, freedom.

- He uses figurative language to convey how he felt "beast-like" and had only a "faint beam" of inconstant hope.
- He uses personification to convey his sense that the ships on the bay were taunting him with the freedom that he desired.

Remember

1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used to persuade readers.
2. Consider how the author’s choices are meant to affect readers.
3. Explain how the author uses rhetorical devices to convey meaning or significance.

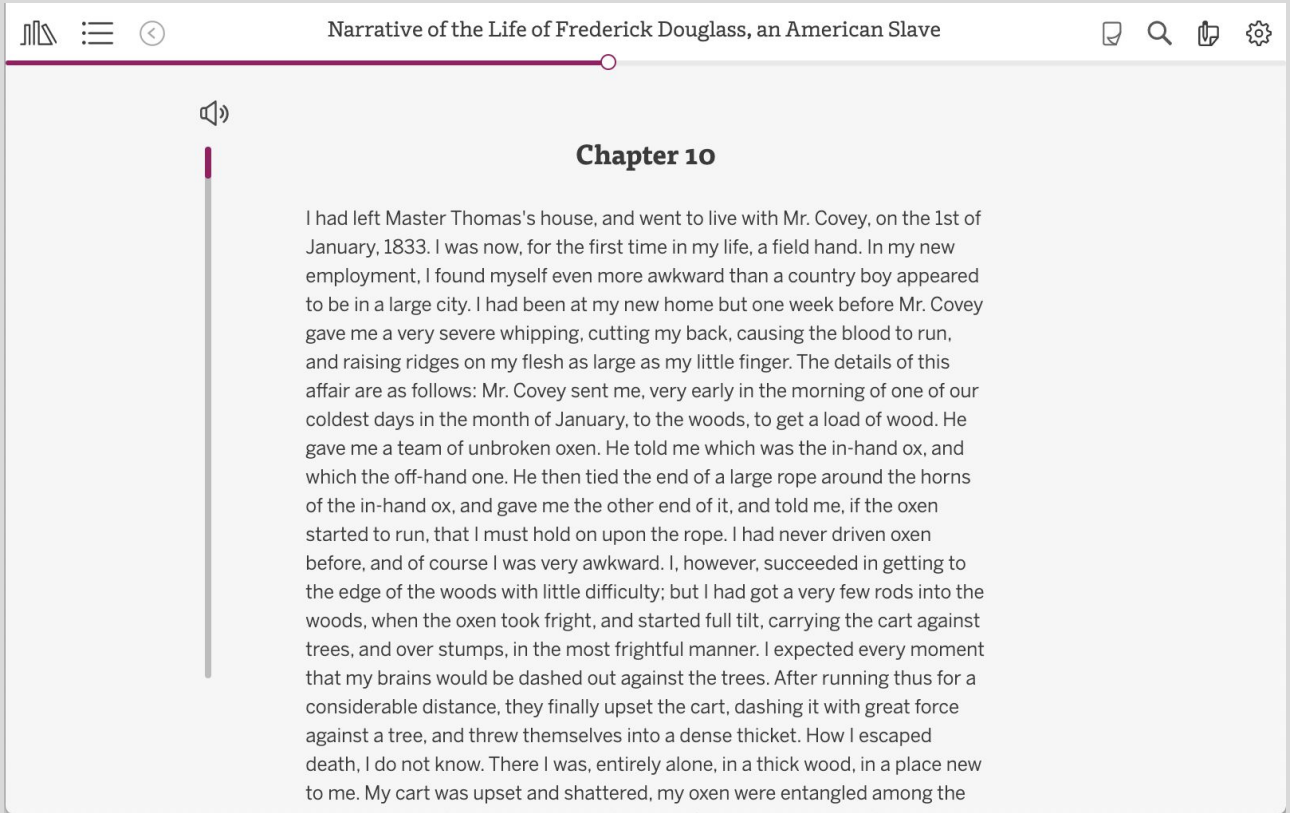
Independent Practice



Benchmark:

Explain what rhetorical devices (such as figurative language) mean or reveal in a text.

Now read paragraph 8 in Chapter 10 in *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.



Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass

Context for Passage 2

In Passage 2, Douglass delivers an apostrophe (a direct address) to the ships on the bay. He contrasts their freedom with his enslavement and makes a plan to escape.

Practice reading to explain the meaning or significance of rhetorical devices

Step 1

Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used to persuade readers.

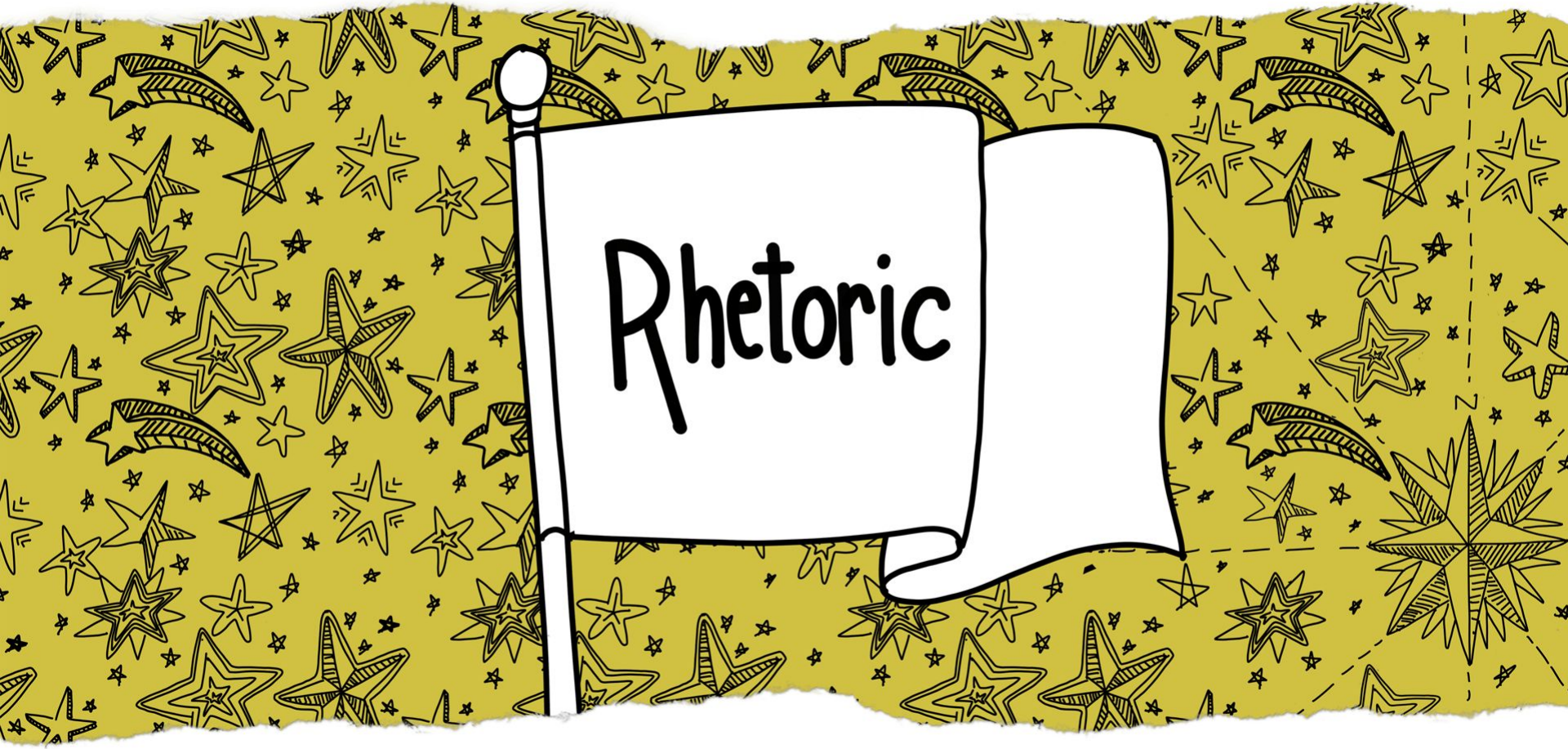
Step 2

Consider how the author’s choices are meant to affect readers.

Step 3

Explain how the author uses rhetorical devices to convey meaning or significance.

Check for Understanding



Share and Discuss

1. Read closely, highlight, and annotate details that are used to persuade readers.

Share and Discuss

2. How are the author’s choices meant to affect readers?

Share and Discuss

3. Explain how the author uses rhetorical devices to convey meaning or significance.