Words That Persuade

Notice how word choices make a proposal more convincing.

8.VL.31 "Integrate effective vocabulary into writing to create specific effects and communicate purposefully."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two words that make the current problem seem worth fixing, and circle two words that make the proposed change appealing.

A New Use for the Corner

1 Dear Principal Rivera, each afternoon, students cross the strip of pavement beside the cafeteria. After rain, water pools across the walkway, and sneakers splash through the murky puddles. On sunny days, the same corner looks stark and empty, even while students crowd around the few tables nearby. This neglected patch could do more than collect water and wrappers. I am asking you to replace part of the pavement with a small rain garden, a shallow planted area that catches water flowing off nearby pavement.

2 Imagine a narrow bed of grasses and purple coneflowers beside the path. During a storm, water could flow into the shallow bed instead of spreading across the walking surface. The plants and soil would soak up some of that water, though a rain garden would not stop every puddle. On dry days, the grasses could soften the hard edge of the cafeteria, and the flowers could draw bees and butterflies. A once bleak corner could become a lively place to pause.

3 We could begin with one modest section rather than rebuild the entire courtyard. Students could help choose plants suited to our area, while the grounds crew could advise us on where water already flows. Signs could explain why the garden sometimes looks damp after a storm. This is not a request for a fancy display. It is a practical way to turn a troublesome crossing into a welcoming space. Please let our class present a plan at the next school meeting.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does “murky” add that “wet” would not? How does that word support the writer’s request?

2. Compare “stark” in the first paragraph with “lively” in the second. How do these words shape your view of the proposed change?

3. What picture does “soften the hard edge” create? Why might that picture help persuade the principal?

4. Why might the writer call the first section “modest” rather than “huge”?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences to persuade a school leader to improve one place at school other than the courtyard. Underline at least three precise words that help the reader picture the problem or the change.

ANSWER KEY

Words That Persuade

GRADE 8 · 8.VL.31

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two words that make the current problem seem worth fixing, and circle two words that make the proposed change appealing. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does "murky" add that "wet" would not? How does that word support the writer's request?	**"Murky" suggests dirty, cloudy puddles. It makes the crossing sound unpleasant and more worth improving.**
2	Compare "stark" in the first paragraph with "lively" in the second. How do these words shape your view of the proposed change?	**"Stark" makes the current corner seem bare and uninviting, while "lively" makes the garden seem full of life. The contrast makes the change appealing.**
3	What picture does "soften the hard edge" create? Why might that picture help persuade the principal?	**It suggests that plants would make the paved area look less harsh. That image helps the principal picture a more inviting space.**
4	Why might the writer call the first section "modest" rather than "huge"?	**"Modest" presents the project as limited and manageable, which may make the principal more willing to consider it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The library's return shelf is cluttered, with books piled in uneven stacks. Two labeled bins could separate novels from nonfiction. The orderly shelf would help students find where to put their books. Please let our class ask the librarian whether this plan would work.

For the marking job, accept problem words such as "murky," "stark," or "neglected," and appealing words such as "lively" or "welcoming." For Part 3, look for four sentences about a different school location and at least three underlined words chosen for a clear effect.