The Reel Mystery

Find word meanings in the details around them

9-12.R7 "Use context clues to determine meanings of unfamiliar spoken or written words."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each italicized word in the passage. Underline nearby details that help you figure out what each word means.

Opening Night, Again

1 On Saturday, Mara unlocked the abandoned neighborhood theater with a volunteer crew. They hoped to reopen it for a one-night film festival, but the projector room smelled of dust and wet cardboard. At first, Mara gave the equipment a *perfunctory* look: she glanced at the switches, shrugged, and said everything seemed fine. Her brother Eli was less satisfied. He checked each wire against the manual, cleaned every lens, and wrote down every missing screw. Mara teased him for being *meticulous*, but when a loose cable slipped from the wall, his careful notes suddenly seemed useful.

2 The ceiling lights flickered in an *intermittent* pattern. They burned steadily for a few minutes, went dark without warning, then blinked on again. Eli refused to run a film while the power behaved that way. Behind a locked cabinet, Mara found a heavy film reel with a handwritten label. Nearby sat an *obsolete* ticket machine. It had once printed paper stubs, but the crew now issued digital passes, and no shop stocked its special ink ribbons. The reel held footage of the theater's opening night, including the faces of neighbors who had since moved away.

3 They wanted to share the footage, but the unreliable lights made a full screening risky. Mara proposed a *provisional* plan: for now, they would display photographs of a few frames from the reel on a battery-powered screen while a local technician inspected the wiring. If repairs were finished before the festival, they could show the film instead. Eli copied the reel's label so they could ask the theater's former projectionist about it. That evening, Mara returned to the lobby, where volunteers were sweeping dust from the seats. The theater still needed work, but its opening-night story no longer seemed lost.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does *perfunctory* mean in the first paragraph? Which action gives you a clue?

2. What does *meticulous* mean? Use one of Eli's actions to support your answer.

3. What does *intermittent* tell you about the lights? Identify the detail that helps you know.

4. What does *obsolete* mean in the second paragraph? Explain how the ticket machine provides a clue.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence scene set somewhere other than the theater. Use *provisional* in your scene and include a clue to its meaning. In your third sentence, explain the clue and the word's meaning.

ANSWER KEY # The Reel Mystery

GRADE 9 · 9-12.R7

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each italicized word in the passage. Underline nearby details that help you figure out what each word means. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does *perfunctory* mean in the first paragraph? Which action gives you a clue?	**It means quick and careless. Mara only glances at the switches before saying everything seems fine.**
2	What does *meticulous* mean? Use one of Eli's actions to support your answer.	**It means very careful and thorough. Eli checks each wire, cleans every lens, or records every missing screw.**
3	What does *intermittent* tell you about the lights? Identify the detail that helps you know.	**The lights work off and on rather than continuously. They go dark and then blink on again.**
4	What does *obsolete* mean in the second paragraph? Explain how the ticket machine provides a clue.	**It means no longer used or useful for its former purpose. The crew uses digital passes, and shops no longer stock the machine's ribbons.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When the gym flooded, we put up a provisional sign directing students to the cafeteria. The sign would come down as soon as the gym reopened next week. The plan to remove the sign shows that provisional means temporary.

Accept equivalent meanings supported by specific details in the passage. For the open task, the new scene should use provisional to mean temporary and include a clue that makes that meaning clear.