Clue or Consult?

Choose the best strategy for clarifying an unfamiliar word.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.4 "Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11-12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies."

NAME _____ DATE _____

USE CONTEXT CLUES

Choose CONTEXT when nearby words clearly define, describe, compare, or contrast the unfamiliar word. Use those clues to infer its meaning.

The archivist's meticulous, or extremely careful, labels made every document easy to locate.

CONSULT A REFERENCE

Choose REFERENCE when the surrounding words do not give enough information to infer the word's meaning. Check a dictionary, glossary, or reliable source.

The critic described the novel as baroque.

1 SORT

8 items

For each sentence, circle CONTEXT or REFERENCE for the best strategy, then choose two items in Part 2 and explain the clues you used or why you would consult a reference.

1.	The committee discussed the proposal's viability.	CONTEXT REFERENCE
2.	Her apology was terse, just two clipped sentences.	CONTEXT REFERENCE
3.	Unlike his gregarious sister, Malik avoided parties and preferred solitude.	CONTEXT REFERENCE
4.	The lab report described an anomalous result.	CONTEXT REFERENCE
5.	The CEO's equivocal reply, neither yes nor no, frustrated investors.	CONTEXT REFERENCE
6.	The article says the policy may be rescinded.	CONTEXT REFERENCE
7.	The historian examined a trove of letters from the 1800s.	CONTEXT REFERENCE
8.	The temporary bridge was precarious, wobbling with each passing truck.	CONTEXT REFERENCE

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new sentence for CONTEXT and one new sentence for REFERENCE. Include an unfamiliar or precise word in each sentence.

CONTEXT _____

REFERENCE _____

CHALLENGE

Write a sentence using a multiple-meaning word. Add enough context clues to show which meaning you intend, then explain the clues.

ANSWER KEY

Clue or Consult?

HIGH SCHOOL · L.11-12.4

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The committee discussed the proposal's viability.	**REFERENCE**	The sentence gives no clear clues for viability, which means ability to succeed or work.
2	Her apology was terse, just two clipped sentences.	**CONTEXT**	The phrase "just two clipped sentences" shows that terse means brief or abrupt.
3	Unlike his gregarious sister, Malik avoided parties and preferred solitude.	**CONTEXT**	The contrast with avoiding parties and preferring solitude shows that gregarious means sociable.
4	The lab report described an anomalous result.	**REFERENCE**	The sentence does not provide enough information to infer anomalous, which means unusual or different from what is expected.
5	The CEO's equivocal reply, neither yes nor no, frustrated investors.	**CONTEXT**	The phrase "neither yes nor no" shows that equivocal means unclear or deliberately indirect.
6	The article says the policy may be rescinded.	**REFERENCE**	The sentence does not explain rescinded, which means officially canceled or taken back.
7	The historian examined a trove of letters from the 1800s.	**REFERENCE**	The sentence identifies letters but does not clearly reveal that a trove is a valuable collection or store.
8	The temporary bridge was precarious, wobbling with each passing truck.	**CONTEXT**	The detail that the bridge wobbles shows that precarious means unstable or unsafe.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **CONTEXT**: The trail was arduous, steep and exhausting for every hiker.
- **REFERENCE**: The scientist recorded the specimen's morphology.

Challenge: The editor revised the draft of the article before publication. The clues editor, article, and publication show that draft means an early version of writing.

For Part 2, accept explanations that accurately identify specific context clues or correctly state that the sentence lacks sufficient clues. For Part 3, accept varied answers if the category choice and strategy are justified.