Words at Port

Reference tools make historical language precise.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.4c "Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each word Ortiz investigates. Circle every reference source and label it P for pronunciation or part of speech, M for precise meaning, E for etymology, or U for usage guidance.

Building an Exhibit Label

1. While transcribing an 1849 ship log, archivist Lena Ortiz paused at the word barque. A general dictionary listed the pronunciation as "bark" and labeled it a noun. Yet the brief definition, "a sailing vessel," did not show why the captain described its rigging. Ortiz opened a digital maritime glossary, a specialized reference. It defined a barque as a vessel with at least three masts, square sails on the foremast and mainmast, and fore-and-aft sails on the mizzenmast. The glossary gave Ortiz the precise meaning needed for the exhibit label.

2. A second entry stated that passengers were "held in quarantine" before landing. Ortiz checked both a historical encyclopedia and an etymological dictionary. The encyclopedia explained that port quarantine was a health measure that separated people or ships to limit disease. The etymological dictionary traced quarantine through Italian quarantina, meaning "about forty days," from quaranta, "forty." That origin fits the historic practice of a forty-day isolation period, but Ortiz did not define every modern quarantine as forty days. A current dictionary showed that quarantine can be a noun for the separation or a verb meaning to isolate.

3. Ortiz then revised a sentence about investors who ignored health warnings. Her first draft called them disinterested, but a print dictionary's usage note defined disinterested as impartial or free from self-interest. The same note reported that some speakers use it to mean uninterested, or not interested, although the meanings can confuse readers. For a public exhibit, Ortiz consulted the museum's digital style guide, a specialized reference for its publications. It recommended uninterested when the intended meaning was "not paying attention or not concerned." She changed the sentence so its standard usage was clear.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which reference gave the pronunciation and part of speech for barque? State both pieces of information.

2. What precise information did the maritime glossary add that the general dictionary definition did not provide?

3. What does the etymological dictionary reveal about quarantine, and why does Ortiz avoid applying that detail to every modern quarantine?

4. Why did Ortiz replace disinterested with uninterested in her exhibit sentence? Name the specialized reference that supported her choice.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a technical or unclear word from your current reading. Consult one general reference and one specialized reference, then write 3 to 4 sentences that name the sources and explain the word's pronunciation or part of speech, its precise meaning or etymology, and one clear way to use it.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · L.11-12.4c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each word Ortiz investigates. Circle every reference source and label it P for pronunciation or part of speech, M for precise meaning, E for etymology, or U for usage guidance. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which reference gave the pronunciation and part of speech for barque? State both pieces of information.	**A general dictionary. It gives the pronunciation "bark" and identifies barque as a noun.**
2	What precise information did the maritime glossary add that the general dictionary definition did not provide?	**It explained the barque's rigging: at least three masts, square sails on the foremast and mainmast, and fore-and-aft sails on the mizzenmast.**
3	What does the etymological dictionary reveal about quarantine, and why does Ortiz avoid applying that detail to every modern quarantine?	**It traces quarantine through Italian quarantina, "about forty days," from quaranta, "forty." Modern quarantines are not necessarily forty days long.**
4	Why did Ortiz replace disinterested with uninterested in her exhibit sentence? Name the specialized reference that supported her choice.	**Disinterested traditionally means impartial or free from self-interest, while she meant not interested or concerned. The museum's digital style guide recommended uninterested.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I investigated mitosis using Merriam-Webster and OpenStax Biology 2e. Merriam-Webster identifies mitosis as a noun and gives the pronunciation "my-TOH-sis"; it traces the word to Greek mitos, meaning "thread." OpenStax explains that mitosis is nuclear division that produces two genetically identical daughter nuclei. In a lab report, I would write, "Mitosis divides the cell's nucleus," because that wording is more precise than saying it simply makes two new cells.

Accept equivalent wording for the four passage-based answers when it includes the correct source and information. For the open task, accept varied words and sources if the student identifies both a general and specialized reference and uses the findings accurately.