

Clues Under Review

Infer a meaning, then test it against context and a dictionary.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.4d "Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary)."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline "precursory," "cataclysmic," "inundated," and "attenuated." Circle at least two nearby clues for each word that you could use to test an inferred meaning in a dictionary.

Mount St. Helens: Reading the Evidence

- ① On May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens in Washington erupted after weeks of unsettling change. A bulge grew along the volcano's north flank, and small earthquakes rattled the area each day. These precursory events did not guarantee the exact moment of an eruption, but they prompted geologists to close roads and monitor the mountain. At 8:32 a.m., a powerful earthquake triggered a landslide that removed much of the summit. The blast that followed raced outward across forests, leaving observers to reconstruct the sequence from instruments, photographs, and surviving tree trunks.
- ② The eruption was cataclysmic for the surrounding landscape. The lateral blast flattened trees over hundreds of square miles, while ash darkened skies far beyond Washington. Melting snow and ice mixed with rock and soil to form fast-moving mudflows. One such flow surged down the North Fork Toutle River and inundated low-lying channels, bridges, and communities. At Spirit Lake, the landslide displaced water and pushed a floating mat of shattered trees across the surface. The altered terrain showed that a single volcanic event could reshape rivers, habitats, and human plans within hours.
- ③ Scientists still study the eruption because its effects changed over time. In the first years, loose ash and sediment clogged waterways, but vegetation slowly returned to many blast-zone sites. Researchers also examined how far the eruption's noise traveled. Near the volcano, the blast was overwhelming. As the sound moved across the region, distance, terrain, and the atmosphere attenuated it; in distant places, reports described a muted rumble instead of a roar. By comparing such observations with measurements, scientists can distinguish immediate damage from longer-term recovery.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- 1** Use the context to make a preliminary meaning for “precursory,” then check a dictionary. Which sense best verifies your meaning? A. happening before a later event, often as a sign B. happening after an event as a result C. happening repeatedly with no connection. Cite two context clues.

- 2** Use the context to make a preliminary meaning for “cataclysmic,” then check a dictionary. Which sense best verifies your meaning? A. causing great, sudden destruction or change B. easily repaired C. ordinary and seasonal. Cite two context clues.

- 3** Use the context to make a preliminary meaning for “inundated,” then check a dictionary. Which sense best verifies your meaning? A. flooded or overwhelmed with water B. carefully protected C. made narrower. Cite two context clues.

- 4** Use the context to make a preliminary meaning for “attenuated,” then check a dictionary. Which sense best verifies your meaning? A. weakened or reduced in strength B. intensified C. repeated. Cite two context clues.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write two sentences that use one precise word of your choice in a context that lets a reader infer its meaning without directly defining it. Then write your preliminary meaning, the dictionary meaning that verifies or corrects it, and two context clues you used.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline “precursory,” “cataclysmic,” “inundated,” and “attenuated.” Circle at least two nearby clues for each word that you could use to test an inferred meaning in a dictionary. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Use the context to make a preliminary meaning for “precursory,” then check a dictionary. Which sense best verifies your meaning? A. happening before a later event, often as a sign B. happening after an event as a result C. happening repeatedly with no connection. Cite two context clues.	A. “Precursory” means happening before a later event, often as a sign. Clues include the weeks of change before the eruption and geologists closing roads and monitoring the mountain.
2	Use the context to make a preliminary meaning for “cataclysmic,” then check a dictionary. Which sense best verifies your meaning? A. causing great, sudden destruction or change B. easily repaired C. ordinary and seasonal. Cite two context clues.	A. “Cataclysmic” means causing great, sudden destruction or change. Clues include flattened trees over hundreds of square miles, darkened skies, and reshaped rivers and habitats.
3	Use the context to make a preliminary meaning for “inundated,” then check a dictionary. Which sense best verifies your meaning? A. flooded or overwhelmed with water B. carefully protected C. made narrower. Cite two context clues.	A. “Inundated” means flooded or overwhelmed with water. Clues include the fast-moving mudflow surging down the river and its reaching low-lying channels, bridges, and communities.
4	Use the context to make a preliminary meaning for “attenuated,” then check a dictionary. Which sense best verifies your meaning? A. weakened or reduced in strength B. intensified C. repeated. Cite two context clues.	A. “Attenuated” means weakened or reduced in strength. Clues include distance, terrain, and atmosphere affecting the sound and distant reports of a muted rumble instead of a roar.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

After the storm, crews worked to mitigate further damage by covering broken windows and clearing drains before more rain fell. Their quick actions mitigated problems that could have become worse overnight. Preliminary meaning: “mitigate” means reduce or make less severe. Dictionary verification: “make less severe, serious, or painful” confirms the meaning. Clues: the crews acted to prevent further damage, and they addressed problems before they became worse.

Accept accurate paraphrases of the selected dictionary senses when students support them with relevant passage details. For the open task, accept any precise word, provided the context supports a reasonable inference and the dictionary check is accurate.