Words at Work

Use context and reliable sources to build precise vocabulary knowledge.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.6 "Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four academic or domain-specific words or phrases in the passage. Circle the nearby words that help you infer or confirm each meaning.

Reading a Hot City

1 On a July afternoon, city blocks can be far hotter than nearby parks. This urban heat island effect occurs when buildings, roads, and parking lots absorb sunlight and release heat slowly after sunset. Dark asphalt has low albedo, meaning it reflects little solar energy. Its opposite, a pale roof with high albedo, sends more energy back into the atmosphere. Researchers measure surface temperature with satellites and air temperature with instruments placed above the ground. The distinction matters: a scorching sidewalk can raise surface readings even when the air temperature is lower.

2 Urban heat is not distributed evenly. Neighborhoods with fewer trees and more impervious surfaces, materials such as concrete that water cannot soak through, often retain more heat. These conditions can disproportionately affect residents who lack air conditioning or work outdoors. City planners can mitigate, or reduce, the problem by planting street trees, installing shade structures, and requiring cooler roofing materials. A tree canopy, the layer of leaves and branches that shades the ground, can lower local temperatures. However, planners must compare evidence, including maintenance costs, water needs, and residents' priorities, before deciding which intervention fits a particular block.

3 Vocabulary choices shape how readers understand a proposal. Calling a project “tree planting” is accurate but broad. Calling it a heat-mitigation intervention signals a specific purpose: reducing harmful temperatures. The second phrase also invites questions. What evidence shows that the project lowers heat? Which residents will benefit? In a report, a writer may need to define intervention for a general audience, but may use it without definition when addressing urban-planning specialists. Skilled readers notice such choices, test a word's meaning against context, and consult a reliable glossary, dictionary, or source when context leaves uncertainty. They do not assume that a familiar word has its everyday meaning in every field.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does albedo mean in this passage? Use one detail from paragraph 1 to support your answer.

2. Use the context in paragraph 2 to explain the meaning of impervious surfaces.

3. What does mitigate mean in the phrase "heat-mitigation intervention"? Explain how the phrase gives the project a more specific purpose than "tree planting."

4. According to paragraph 3, what should you do when context does not fully clarify an important word, and why might this step matter?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose one academic or domain-specific word from a current class reading or assignment. In two sentences, define the word accurately for an unfamiliar reader and use it in a topic-appropriate sentence; name a reliable source you would use to verify the definition.

ANSWER KEY # Words at Work

HIGH SCHOOL · L.11-12.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four academic or domain-specific words or phrases in the passage. Circle the nearby words that help you infer or confirm each meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does albedo mean in this passage? Use one detail from paragraph 1 to support your answer.	**Albedo is a surface's ability to reflect solar energy. The passage says dark asphalt with low albedo reflects little solar energy, while a pale roof with high albedo sends more energy back.**
2	Use the context in paragraph 2 to explain the meaning of impervious surfaces.	**Impervious surfaces are materials, such as concrete, that water cannot soak through.**
3	What does mitigate mean in the phrase "heat-mitigation intervention"? Explain how the phrase gives the project a more specific purpose than "tree planting."	**Mitigate means reduce. A heat-mitigation intervention is a project intended to reduce harmful temperatures, while tree planting does not state that specific purpose.**
4	According to paragraph 3, what should you do when context does not fully clarify an important word, and why might this step matter?	**Consult a reliable glossary, dictionary, or source because a word can have a specialized meaning in a particular field.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In ecology, biodiversity means the variety of living things in an area, including the variety of species. High biodiversity can help an ecosystem recover after a disturbance; I would verify this definition in a university ecology glossary or a reputable science encyclopedia.

Accept accurate context-based definitions stated in students' own words and relevant evidence from the passage. For the open task, accept varied words and examples if the definition, use, and named verification source are appropriate and credible.