Roots With Clues

Use nearby words to uncover meanings in an informational text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4a "Use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the words or phrases that help you figure out brackish, intricate, coastal guardians, and current. Write a short meaning beside each target word or phrase.

Mangroves at Work

1. Along tropical coasts, mangrove trees grow where rivers meet the sea. The water there is brackish, meaning it is partly salty and partly fresh. Most trees would struggle in this mix, but mangroves have special roots that help manage salt. Their roots also grip the muddy shore, so waves are less likely to wash soil away during storms.

2. Below the water, the roots form an intricate maze, like a tangled underwater forest. Small fish can weave through the spaces and hide from larger hunters. Because the roots provide shelter, young fish often survive long enough to grow. The trees also slow moving water. As the current weakens, bits of mud settle around the roots instead of drifting away.

3. People sometimes call mangroves coastal guardians. This phrase does not mean the trees wear uniforms or stand watch. Instead, it compares their helpful work to the work of guards. During storms, mangrove forests can reduce wave energy and trap sediment. They also offer nesting places for birds and feeding areas for animals. When people remove mangroves, nearby coasts may face stronger erosion.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what does brackish mean? Which words in the paragraph helped you decide?

2. What does intricate mean in paragraph 2? Explain how the comparison helps you understand it.

3. What does the phrase coastal guardians mean in paragraph 3?

4. In paragraph 2, what does current mean? What cause-and-effect detail gives you a clue?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence mini-paragraph about a place in nature. Use one challenging word, and include context clues that show its meaning through a comparison or a cause-and-effect relationship. After your paragraph, write the word's meaning in a short phrase.

ANSWER KEY

Roots With Clues

GRADE 5 · L.5.4a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the words or phrases that help you figure out brackish, intricate, coastal guardians, and current. Write a short meaning beside each target word or phrase. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does brackish mean? Which words in the paragraph helped you decide?	**Brackish means partly salty and partly fresh. The clue words are "partly salty and partly fresh."**
2	What does intricate mean in paragraph 2? Explain how the comparison helps you understand it.	**Intricate means complex or made of many connected parts. The roots are compared to "a tangled underwater forest" and called a maze.**
3	What does the phrase coastal guardians mean in paragraph 3?	**It means mangroves protect coastlines, like guards protect something. They reduce wave energy and trap sediment.**
4	In paragraph 2, what does current mean? What cause-and-effect detail gives you a clue?	**Current means moving water. When it weakens, mud settles around the roots instead of drifting away.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The sandy beach was porous, like a sponge with many tiny spaces. Because water could slip through the sand, puddles disappeared quickly after the rain. The porous ground let air reach plant roots. Porous means full of tiny spaces that let water or air pass through.

Accept equivalent meanings when students use evidence from nearby words or phrases. For Part 3, accept any accurate context clues that clearly reveal the student's chosen word meaning.