Marsh Word Detectives

Use context clues, then check a source to verify meaning.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.4d "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 the three vocabulary words whose meanings are checked in the passage. Circle the nearby clues that support each first guess, then write 1, 2, and 3 beside the matching source checks.

Checking Words at the Marsh

(1) During a class visit to a coastal marsh, students tested water from a shallow channel. It was brackish, so it tasted faintly salty, yet it was less salty than the nearby ocean. The group first guessed that brackish meant partly salty. Back at the visitor center, they opened a field dictionary. Its entry said, "somewhat salty, especially from a mixture of fresh and sea water." The definition confirmed their preliminary meaning, and they recorded the verified meaning in notebooks.

(2) Near a trail bridge, the students saw a ranger lift a sluice, a sliding gate that controls water moving through a channel. Before reading the sign, Devon inferred that sluice might be a kind of door because the gate rose and water rushed beneath it. The sign used the term "water-control gate," which supported his inference. Devon checked a dictionary app and found the same basic meaning. He revised his notes to say that a sluice is a gate used to manage flowing water.

(3) At the final station, rain had washed soil into the marsh channel, making the water turbid. Lena could not see the pebbles on the bottom, even in a clear jar. She inferred that turbid meant cloudy or muddy, based on the water's appearance. In the dictionary, turbid was defined as "cloudy or unclear because of stirred-up material." The wording was not exactly the same as Lena's first guess, but it confirmed the central idea. She replaced muddy with cloudy in her final note.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What preliminary meaning did the students infer for brackish before they checked the dictionary?

2. Which two details in the final paragraph help Lena infer the meaning of turbid?

3. How did the trail sign help verify Devon's inferred meaning of sluice?

4. Why did Lena change muddy to cloudy in her final note?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences about an animal, place, or activity. Use one challenging word, give a context clue in the first sentence, then state a preliminary meaning and a dictionary-verified meaning in the second sentence.

ANSWER KEY

Marsh Word Detectives

GRADE 6 · L.6.4d

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the three vocabulary words whose meanings are checked in the passage. Circle the nearby clues that support each first guess, then write 1, 2, and 3 beside the matching source checks. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What preliminary meaning did the students infer for brackish before they checked the dictionary?	**Partly salty.**
2	Which two details in the final paragraph help Lena infer the meaning of turbid?	**Rain had washed soil into the channel, and Lena could not see the pebbles on the bottom.**
3	How did the trail sign help verify Devon's inferred meaning of sluice?	**The sign called it a water-control gate, supporting his idea that it was a kind of door or gate that controls water.**
4	Why did Lena change muddy to cloudy in her final note?	**The dictionary definition said turbid means cloudy or unclear because of stirred-up material, so cloudy matched the verified meaning more closely.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The nocturnal bat left its roost after sunset and hunted insects in the dark. I first thought nocturnal meant active at night, and a dictionary confirmed that it means active during the night.

Accept equivalent wording that shows a reasonable first inference based on a context clue and a verified dictionary meaning. In the open response, check that the student includes exactly two sentences, a context clue, a preliminary meaning, and a dictionary-verified meaning.