Falcon Word Watch

Infer a word meaning, then test it with context and a dictionary.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.7.4d "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 ledge, stoop, vigilant, and intruder. In the margin, number them 1 to 4, write a brief preliminary meaning for each, and circle the context clues that help you verify each meaning.

Watching City Falcons

1 On a spring morning, Maya stood across from a downtown office tower and watched a peregrine falcon on a narrow ledge. The bird remained motionless until a pigeon crossed the open sky. Then the falcon pushed away from its perch, folded its wings, and dropped so quickly that Maya nearly lost sight of it. A volunteer recorded the time and direction of the flight. Peregrine falcons often use tall buildings as nesting sites because the structures resemble the steep cliffs where the birds naturally live.

2 Instead of chasing pigeons through narrow streets, the falcon waited for open space. When it began its stoop, it angled downward and gathered speed with each second. Air rushed past its feathers, but the bird made tiny changes to its wing position. Those adjustments helped it aim at a single pigeon in the flock. A peregrine can reach very high speeds during such dives, although its exact speed depends on wind, distance, and the bird's path. The watching group kept a respectful distance and did not disturb the nest area.

3 Later, the volunteers entered their observations into a shared log. They noted that the adults became vigilant when another large bird flew near the tower. One adult gave sharp calls, while the other stayed close to the nest ledge and watched the intruder. The log also listed prey, the animals a predator hunts for food, such as pigeons and starlings. By comparing notes over several weeks, the group could tell whether the falcons were regularly using the site.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Before using a dictionary, what does ledge most likely mean in paragraph 1? Give two words or phrases from the paragraph that support your preliminary meaning.

2. Check a dictionary entry for stoop. Which meaning fits paragraph 2 best, and what action in the paragraph verifies that meaning?

3. Use context to infer the meaning of vigilant in paragraph 3. How do the adults' actions verify your meaning?

4. The word intruder could have different meanings. Which meaning fits paragraph 3: a bird entering a place where it may not belong, or a person invited to visit? Give two clues that verify your choice.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a word you do not know well from a book or article you are reading. In three sentences, copy the sentence with the word, state your preliminary meaning using a context clue, then give a dictionary meaning and explain whether it confirms or changes your idea.

ANSWER KEY

Falcon Word Watch

GRADE 7 · L.7.4d

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline ledge, stoop, vigilant, and intruder. In the margin, number them 1 to 4, write a brief preliminary meaning for each, and circle the context clues that help you verify each meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Before using a dictionary, what does ledge most likely mean in paragraph 1? Give two words or phrases from the paragraph that support your preliminary meaning.	**A ledge is a narrow, flat surface that sticks out from a wall or cliff. Supporting details include "narrow ledge," the falcon was "on" it, and the tower resembles cliffs.**
2	Check a dictionary entry for stoop. Which meaning fits paragraph 2 best, and what action in the paragraph verifies that meaning?	**Stoop means a steep, fast downward dive by a bird of prey. The falcon "angled downward" and "gathered speed," verifying this meaning.**
3	Use context to infer the meaning of vigilant in paragraph 3. How do the adults' actions verify your meaning?	**Vigilant means watchful and alert to danger. The adults gave sharp calls, stayed near the nest, and watched the other bird.**
4	The word intruder could have different meanings. Which meaning fits paragraph 3: a bird entering a place where it may not belong, or a person invited to visit? Give two clues that verify your choice.	**It means a bird entering a place where it may not belong. Clues include "another large bird flew near the tower" and the adults gave calls and watched it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The rabbit's brown fur camouflaged it among the fallen leaves. I first thought camouflaged meant blended in and became hard to see because the fur matched the leaves. A dictionary says camouflaged means hidden by colors or patterns that make something hard to see, so it confirms my idea.

Accept equivalent meanings when students support them with accurate passage evidence or a fitting dictionary definition. For the open task, check that the student gives a preliminary inference, names a context clue, and compares it with a dictionary meaning.