Arctic Clue Hunt

Use nearby details to uncover the meaning of unfamiliar words.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.4a "Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle intermittent, formidable, corroborated, and tentative, then underline at least two nearby clues for each word and number the clues 1 and 2 so you can infer each word's meaning.

Searching for Franklin's Ships

1 On September 7, 2014, a Canadian-led expedition found HMS Erebus, one of two ships lost during Sir John Franklin's 1845 Arctic voyage. The search team did not follow a single clear trail. Instead, it combined Inuit oral histories, old British records, and sonar images of the seafloor. Their progress was intermittent: storms forced boats back to shore, ice closed routes, and equipment sometimes could not scan the water. Yet each return trip added another small piece of evidence. The discovery showed that patient research can connect knowledge from different sources.

2 Finding Erebus did not settle every question. The other ship, HMS Terror, remained hidden for two more years. Search crews faced a formidable environment in the Canadian Arctic. They worked far from repair shops and hospitals, where cold could damage engines and a sudden change in wind could trap a vessel behind thick ice. To plan safely, teams studied weather reports and traveled with experienced local guides. In 2016, researchers found Terror in Terror Bay, Nunavut, after it had rested beneath the water for decades.

3 The wrecks also helped historians evaluate earlier accounts. Inuit witnesses had described a large ship sinking near King William Island, but some researchers once doubted that location. When sonar revealed Erebus where those accounts suggested, the finding corroborated the witnesses' knowledge. It did not solve the expedition's final mystery, however. No document has fully explained why Franklin's crew abandoned both ships or what happened to every sailor. Historians therefore describe some conclusions as tentative, especially when they rest on a few objects or a single written report rather than several independent sources.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does intermittent most nearly mean in paragraph 1? Use two details from the paragraph to support your answer.

2. In paragraph 2, what does formidable mean? Explain how its position before environment and the details that follow help you infer its meaning.

3. What does corroborated mean in paragraph 3? Which event provides the clue to its meaning?

4. What does tentative most nearly mean in paragraph 3? Which comparison in the sentence helps you infer the meaning?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly two sentences about a real or imagined investigation. Use one challenging word, underline it, and include at least two context clues that help a reader infer its meaning without directly defining it.

ANSWER KEY

Arctic Clue Hunt

HIGH SCHOOL · L.9-10.4a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle intermittent, formidable, corroborated, and tentative, then underline at least two nearby clues for each word and number the clues 1 and 2 so you can infer each word's meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does intermittent most nearly mean in paragraph 1? Use two details from the paragraph to support your answer.	**Intermittent means occurring with breaks or not continuously. Storms sent boats ashore, ice closed routes, and equipment sometimes could not scan the water.**
2	In paragraph 2, what does formidable mean? Explain how its position before environment and the details that follow help you infer its meaning.	**Formidable means very difficult or challenging. It describes the environment, and the following details name cold, damaged engines, changing wind, and thick ice.**
3	What does corroborated mean in paragraph 3? Which event provides the clue to its meaning?	**Corroborated means confirmed or supported. Sonar revealed Erebus where Inuit accounts had suggested it would be.**
4	What does tentative most nearly mean in paragraph 3? Which comparison in the sentence helps you infer the meaning?	**Tentative means not fully certain or provisional. The comparison is between conclusions based on a few objects or one report and conclusions supported by several independent sources.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The map's route was __circuitous__, looping around two lakes before returning near the starting point. Because the team had to retrace several bends, they arrived after sunset.

Accept reasonable synonym answers when students support them with accurate nearby details from the passage. For Part 3, accept any two-sentence response with an underlined challenging word and at least two clear context clues that do not directly define the word.