Words Under the Marquee

Read how close word choices sharpen a report.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.5b "Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each pair or group of close-meaning words that the writer contrasts or weighs, then write a brief note above each one telling how its meaning differs in this situation.

The Riverton Theater

1 At dawn, Maya entered the Riverton Theater before the survey crew arrived. Dust floated above the red seats, and a torn poster clung to the lobby wall. She inspected the poster, then studied the cracked frame around it. In her notebook, Maya wrote that the theater was old. She considered calling it ancient, yet chose historic because the building had served the town for ninety years and had hosted important community events. Its faded paint and uneven floorboards made the room feel worn, but its stage had carried graduations, concerts, and public meetings.

2 Outside, a preservation group gathered beside the marquee. Their leader asked the council to delay demolition until engineers could examine the structure. Later, when a contractor parked a demolition machine near the curb, she pleaded with him to wait one more day. The leader also described the theater as neglected, not abandoned. No one had used it regularly for years, but volunteers still swept the lobby and repaired leaks when they could. Her careful language made the building seem troubled and worth saving, rather than empty of all care or hope.

3 When the survey crew finally arrived, Maya accompanied an engineer through the auditorium. He noted that the roof was damaged, but he did not call it ruined. Several beams needed replacement; however, the walls and foundation remained sound. Maya photographed the dark stage and described the room as quiet. She rejected silent, since pigeons rustled in the rafters and traffic murmured beyond the doors. By noon, the engineer reported that repairs would be difficult but possible. Maya's article did not promise rescue. Instead, it presented a case for giving the theater a careful, realistic chance.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Compare inspected and studied in paragraph 1. What does each word suggest about Maya's way of looking?

2. Why is historic a more precise choice than ancient for the Riverton Theater? Use details from paragraph 1.

3. How does pleaded change the tone of the leader's request compared with asked in paragraph 2?

4. Explain the difference between neglected and abandoned as the leader uses them in paragraph 2.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly two sentences about a real or imagined object or place. Use two close-meaning adjectives or verbs, and include details that show why one word fits better than the other.

ANSWER KEY

Words Under the Marquee

HIGH SCHOOL · L.9-10.5b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each pair or group of close-meaning words that the writer contrasts or weighs, then write a brief note above each one telling how its meaning differs in this situation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare inspected and studied in paragraph 1. What does each word suggest about Maya's way of looking?	**Inspected suggests checking the poster's condition. Studied suggests looking at the frame more thoughtfully and carefully for details.**
2	Why is historic a more precise choice than ancient for the Riverton Theater? Use details from paragraph 1.	**Historic suggests that the theater has importance because of its role in town events. Ancient would mainly stress extreme age, and the theater is ninety years old.**
3	How does pleaded change the tone of the leader's request compared with asked in paragraph 2?	**Pleaded suggests a more urgent, emotional appeal than asked. The nearby demolition machine makes her request especially desperate.**
4	Explain the difference between neglected and abandoned as the leader uses them in paragraph 2.	**Neglected means the theater has not received enough care. Abandoned would mean it had been completely left behind, but volunteers still clean it and repair leaks.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The curator described the painting as faded rather than colorless, because pale blue and gold still showed beneath the dust. Her word choice shows that the painting had lost some brightness, not all of its color.

Accept responses that identify a meaningful difference between words with similar denotations and support that difference with passage details. For the open task, accept varied word pairs if the two sentences clearly show a precise, context-based distinction.