Reef Word Detectives

Use context to unpack technical and vivid language.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.6.4 "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two technical words or phrases. Circle one word with a strong feeling, and number one phrase that is not meant literally, then use nearby clues to infer each meaning.

Growing a Reef

1 At dawn, marine biologist Leila Torres checks a coral nursery beneath the waves. The nursery is not a building. It is a set of underwater frames that hold small pieces of living coral. These pieces, called fragments, are attached to the frames with epoxy, a waterproof glue. The frames keep the fragments off the sandy bottom, where they could be buried. In clear water, the nursery looks like a tiny forest growing in a blue, moving sky.

2 Coral animals build hard skeletons from calcium carbonate, a mineral also found in limestone. When the water becomes too warm for too long, corals may expel the algae living inside their tissues. This event is called bleaching. The coral does not always die immediately, but it loses a major food source and its bright color. A bleached reef can appear ghostly, an unsettling sight for divers. If cooler conditions return soon, some corals can take in algae again and recover.

3 To restore a damaged reef, divers choose healthy fragments from several parent colonies. Using a process called outplanting, they fasten the fragments to bare rock with epoxy. The work is slow because each fragment must be placed where sunlight and water flow can reach it. A restored reef may become a shelter for fish, crabs, and other animals. Still, the reef's future hangs in the balance if pollution and unusually warm water continue. Restoration helps, but it cannot solve every problem alone.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the word "nursery" mean as it is used in the first paragraph? Use a detail from the passage to support your answer.

2. What does the technical term "calcium carbonate" mean in the second paragraph?

3. What feeling does the word "ghostly" add to the description of a bleached reef?

4. What does the phrase "the reef's future hangs in the balance" mean?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences about a city garden or park. Use one technical word about plants, weather, or land and one figurative or connotative word or phrase. Underline the technical word, circle the other word or phrase, and explain both meanings in your final sentence.

ANSWER KEY

Reef Word Detectives

GRADE 6 · RI.6.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two technical words or phrases. Circle one word with a strong feeling, and number one phrase that is not meant literally, then use nearby clues to infer each meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the word "nursery" mean as it is used in the first paragraph? Use a detail from the passage to support your answer.	**A coral nursery is a set of underwater frames where small coral fragments are held and grown.**
2	What does the technical term "calcium carbonate" mean in the second paragraph?	**It is a mineral that coral animals use to build their hard skeletons.**
3	What feeling does the word "ghostly" add to the description of a bleached reef?	**It makes the reef seem pale, eerie, and unsettling.**
4	What does the phrase "the reef's future hangs in the balance" mean?	**The reef's future is uncertain because pollution and warm water may continue to harm it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On the riverbank, rainwater cut narrow paths through the soil. This [underline: erosion] carried loose dirt into the stream. The [circle: hungry] river pulled at the muddy bank after the storm. Erosion means soil is moved by water or wind, and hungry suggests the river seems powerful and able to take more land.

Accept equivalent meanings that are supported by context. For the open task, check that the student correctly uses and explains one technical term and one figurative or connotative word or phrase.