Clues in the Current

Use surrounding details to determine precise word meanings.

ELA.12.V.1 "Finding Meaning"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle the words provisional, mitigate, and obdurate. Underline the nearby words or phrases that reveal each meaning, then write a brief meaning in the margin.

Rebuilding a Living Coast

1 Along the Louisiana coast, engineers and residents are rebuilding wetlands that once blunted storm surge. When river levees prevented the Mississippi from spreading sediment across the delta, many marshes sank or washed away. Restoration crews now cut controlled openings in some levees, allowing muddy river water to enter selected basins. The plan is provisional: managers adjust the openings after measuring salinity, water height, and the amount of land that forms. Rather than promising a permanent fix, they treat each diversion as a test whose results guide the next decision.

2 One complication is that freshwater does not automatically restore every damaged marsh. Oysters and other species tolerate only particular ranges of saltiness, so a large diversion can alter an estuary's food web. To mitigate that risk, scientists release water gradually and compare conditions at several sites. Their monitoring is meticulous: they record plant growth, fish populations, and soil elevation season after season. This patient approach may seem slow, but it helps them distinguish a short-lived change, such as a cloudy-water event, from a durable shift in the ecosystem.

3 Debates about these projects can become obdurate, especially when people fear that a new water route will affect fishing or property. Yet the evidence is not confined to a single map or model. Researchers combine satellite images, field samples, and local observations, then revise predictions when data contradict earlier assumptions. That willingness to reconsider is central to adaptive management. It does not mean officials ignore uncertainty. Instead, they state what they do not know, make a limited choice, and use new evidence to decide whether to expand, alter, or stop the project.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does provisional mean as it is used in paragraph 1? Use one detail from the paragraph to support your answer.

2. Which phrase in paragraph 1 most strongly contrasts with the idea that the restoration plan is permanent? Explain what the phrase shows.

3. What does mitigate mean in paragraph 2? Which action by the scientists helps reveal its meaning?

4. What does obdurate mean as it is used in paragraph 3? How does the next part of the paragraph help you infer the meaning?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences using one academic word that does not appear in the passage. Make the word's meaning clear through context, but do not give a dictionary-style definition.

ANSWER KEY

Clues in the Current

GRADE 12 · ELA.12.V.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle the words provisional, mitigate, and obdurate. Underline the nearby words or phrases that reveal each meaning, then write a brief meaning in the margin. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does provisional mean as it is used in paragraph 1? Use one detail from the paragraph to support your answer.	**Provisional means temporary or open to change. Managers adjust the openings, and each diversion is treated as a test that guides the next decision.**
2	Which phrase in paragraph 1 most strongly contrasts with the idea that the restoration plan is permanent? Explain what the phrase shows.	**"Rather than promising a permanent fix" most strongly contrasts with permanence. It shows that managers do not expect one final, unchanging solution.**
3	What does mitigate mean in paragraph 2? Which action by the scientists helps reveal its meaning?	**Mitigate means reduce or lessen. Scientists release water gradually and compare conditions at several sites to reduce the risk to species and the food web.**
4	What does obdurate mean as it is used in paragraph 3? How does the next part of the paragraph help you infer the meaning?	**Obdurate means stubborn or resistant to changing one's view. The paragraph contrasts it with researchers who reconsider and revise predictions when evidence contradicts earlier assumptions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The council reached a tentative agreement, so members planned to review it again before signing. Because the decision could still change, no one treated the proposed rule as final.

Accept accurate synonyms when students support them with relevant context from the passage. For Part 3, accept any two-sentence response that uses a new academic word and supplies enough contextual clues for a reader to infer its meaning.