Reef Words Revealed

Use clues and comparisons to uncover precise meaning.

ELA.6.V.1.3 "Apply knowledge of context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials, and/or background knowledge to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words and phrases, appropriate to grade level."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three words or phrases whose meanings are explained by nearby clues. Circle three phrases that are not meant literally, then use the passage to infer what each one means.

A Reef's Hidden Work

1 Coral reefs may look like colorful stone gardens, but they are built by tiny animals called coral polyps. Each polyp makes a hard cup of calcium carbonate, the same material found in chalk and seashells. Over many years, these cups pile up and form a reef. The reef becomes a busy neighborhood for fish, crabs, and sea turtles. Its cracks and branches provide shelter, or protection from predators and strong waves. Although reefs cover little of the ocean floor, they support many kinds of sea life.

2 Reefs also act as natural breakwaters. When waves roll toward shore, the reef absorbs much of their energy before it reaches beaches and homes. This service can lessen erosion, the wearing away of land by water or wind. Yet reefs are vulnerable, meaning easily harmed, when ocean water becomes too warm. Heat can cause coral bleaching. During bleaching, coral loses the tiny algae that live inside its tissues and give it much of its color and food. A bleached coral is not always dead, but it is under stress, like a runner gasping.

3 Scientists and local communities monitor reefs by measuring water temperature and counting coral cover, the amount of seafloor covered by living coral. They also reduce pollution that can cloud the water and block sunlight from algae. Some groups plant corals in areas, a process often called coral gardening. This phrase does not mean people grow corals in pots. Instead, they attach coral pieces to reefs, where the pieces may grow. Protecting a reef is not just a drop in the bucket, a small effort with no effect. Many actions can help reefs recover.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what does shelter mean? Which nearby words help you determine its meaning?

2. What does vulnerable mean in paragraph 2? Use the context to explain your answer.

3. What does the comparison to "a runner gasping" suggest about bleached coral?

4. What does coral gardening mean in this passage, and what does the word gardening suggest about the work?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly two sentences about a natural place. In the first sentence, use a word with a context clue that explains it. In the second sentence, use a figurative phrase about that place and explain its intended meaning.

ANSWER KEY # Reef Words Revealed

GRADE 6 · ELA.6.V.1.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three words or phrases whose meanings are explained by nearby clues. Circle three phrases that are not meant literally, then use the passage to infer what each one means. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does shelter mean? Which nearby words help you determine its meaning?	**Shelter means protection. The words "protection from predators and strong waves" explain it.**
2	What does vulnerable mean in paragraph 2? Use the context to explain your answer.	**Vulnerable means easily harmed. The passage directly explains that warm water can harm reefs.**
3	What does the comparison to "a runner gasping" suggest about bleached coral?	**It suggests that the coral is weakened and struggling under stress, but it is not necessarily dead.**
4	What does coral gardening mean in this passage, and what does the word gardening suggest about the work?	**It means attaching coral pieces to reefs so they may grow. Gardening suggests careful tending and helping living things grow.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A wetland is a marshy area, or land that stays wet for much of the year, where frogs find food and shelter. Calling it a sponge means it soaks up extra water, not that it is a cleaning tool.

Accept equivalent meanings when students support them with relevant passage clues. For Part 3, check for exactly two sentences, a clear context clue in the first sentence, and a figurative phrase with an accurate explanation in the second sentence.