Words With Weight

Track how near-synonyms shift tone and meaning.

11.L.V.3.c "Analyze the nuances in connotative meaning of words that share a similar denotation. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline at least four groups of words that have a similar basic meaning. Link each group with a line, then write a brief tone note, such as softer, harsher, more urgent, or more hopeful, beside each group.

The Aurora Theater

1. On the evening before Riverton's council vote, Mara unlocked Aurora Theater for a public tour. The building was old, but it was not ruined. Dust softened the red seats, and several bulbs had gone dark, yet the painted ceiling still showed blue stars. In the lobby, a few visitors paused beside framed playbills. The auditorium was nearly empty. Still, Mara could not call it vacant. Stage manager's notes lay on the piano, and student scripts waited by the curtain. The theater held its history like a breath held before a song.

2. At the council meeting, the preservation group proposed repairing the theater and using it for student performances. Lena suggested a modest tax grant, speaking carefully because several neighbors feared higher bills. Mr. Ortiz urged the council to act before winter rain damaged the roof. Across the aisle, a developer demanded approval for apartments, saying delay would cost the town jobs. The three speakers wanted action, but Lena offered a possibility, Ortiz pressed for speed, and the developer struck the table with his folder. Mara recorded their words in her notebook.

3. After the vote was postponed, Mara walked home through the square. Her steps were slow, but she neither trudged nor marched. Instead, she drifted past the fountain, listening to water tap against stone. At her gate, Lena called from across the street, "We can save it." Mara considered the word save. The theater did not face one sudden disaster. It needed patient care, money, and people willing to preserve what remained. She looked back at the blue-star sign, faint above the theater's upper windows.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, how does vacant have a different connotation from empty? Use details from the paragraph to support your answer.

2. Rank suggested, urged, and demanded from least forceful to most forceful in paragraph 2. What does each word reveal about the speaker's approach?

3. What does drifted suggest about Mara's movement and mood in paragraph 3 that trudged and marched would not suggest?

4. Why is preserve a more fitting word than save for the theater in paragraph 3?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence mini-scene about one action. Use three words with similar denotations but different connotations in the first three sentences, then explain in the fourth sentence how the word choices shape the reader's view.

ANSWER KEY

Words With Weight

GRADE 11 · 11.L.V.3.c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline at least four groups of words that have a similar basic meaning. Link each group with a line, then write a brief tone note, such as softer, harsher, more urgent, or more hopeful, beside each group. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, how does vacant have a different connotation from empty? Use details from the paragraph to support your answer.	**Empty means that few people are in the auditorium. Vacant suggests that the theater has no use or purpose, but the notes and student scripts show that it still has a purpose.**
2	Rank suggested, urged, and demanded from least forceful to most forceful in paragraph 2. What does each word reveal about the speaker's approach?	**Suggested, urged, demanded. Lena is cautious and offers an option, Ortiz presses for prompt action, and the developer makes a forceful requirement.**
3	What does drifted suggest about Mara's movement and mood in paragraph 3 that trudged and marched would not suggest?	**Drifted suggests slow, unfocused, reflective movement. Trudged would suggest heavy effort or misery, while marched would suggest determined or angry purpose.**
4	Why is preserve a more fitting word than save for the theater in paragraph 3?	**Save suggests rescue from an immediate danger. Preserve suggests ongoing care to protect what remains, which matches the theater's need for money, maintenance, and continued community support.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the bus stop, Nia glanced at her watch. When the bus still did not come, she looked down the dark street. After twenty minutes, she stared at the empty road. Glanced suggests a quick check, looked is neutral, and stared shows tense, sustained attention.

Accept accurate explanations of each word's emotional force, intensity, or implied attitude when supported by passage details. For the open response, accept any clear set of near-synonyms and an explanation that accurately distinguishes their connotations.