Words That Weigh

Study how phrasing frames a public decision.

11.L.V.3 "Meaning & Purpose: Analyze and craft nuanced words and phrases in a variety of texts and for a variety of purposes."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three phrases that shape how listeners might view the fee. Write a brief note beside each underlined phrase naming the idea or feeling it suggests.

At the River Meeting

1 At Tuesday's council meeting, Maya Ortiz carried a jar of cloudy river water to the podium. "This is not a prop," she said. "It is what my neighbors see after a hard rain." She described the proposed storm-water fee as "a shared repair fund," then paused before adding that some households already count every dollar. A clerk placed the fee proposal beside the jar on the narrow desk. Several council members leaned forward as Ortiz spoke. Outside, the river ran behind apartment blocks, playgrounds, and a bus depot.

2 Ortiz did not call the fee a tax, although it would appear on utility bills. She called it "a rain-day contribution." When a contractor warned that the plan might delay a road project, Ortiz replied that delaying repairs was "borrowing trouble from next season." She avoided promising a quick cure. Instead, she said the city could begin with "the blocks that flood first" and publish monthly maps showing where crews worked. Her closing sentence asked the council to approve a pilot before the autumn storms. The vote was scheduled for the following week.

3 Near the end, a shop owner said the fee would be "one more leak in a thin budget." Ortiz repeated the image, but shifted it: "A budget can be thin, and a basement can still be full." She then called the plan "an umbrella with a price tag," not "a bargain" or "a burden." Her final request was narrow: fund drainage work for one year, review the maps publicly, and adjust the fee if the results fell short. The room remained divided, yet the debate had moved beyond whether flooding mattered.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does Ortiz's statement, "This is not a prop," affect the meaning of the jar of river water?

2. Compare "a shared repair fund" with "one more leak in a thin budget." How does each phrase frame the fee differently?

3. What does Ortiz mean when she says delaying repairs is "borrowing trouble from next season"?

4. Why is "an umbrella with a price tag" a more nuanced description of the plan than simply calling it "a bargain" or "a burden"?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write 3 to 4 sentences advocating for a local improvement that costs money. Use one concrete image and one metaphor or carefully chosen phrase that acknowledges a tradeoff, then end with a specific, limited request.

Words That Weigh

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three phrases that shape how listeners might view the fee. Write a brief note beside each underlined phrase naming the idea or feeling it suggests. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does Ortiz's statement, "This is not a prop," affect the meaning of the jar of river water?	**It presents the jar as real evidence of neighbors' experience, not as a staged object meant only to persuade.**
2	Compare "a shared repair fund" with "one more leak in a thin budget." How does each phrase frame the fee differently?	**"Shared repair fund" frames the fee as a collective investment in repairs, while "one more leak in a thin budget" frames it as an added financial burden.**
3	What does Ortiz mean when she says delaying repairs is "borrowing trouble from next season"?	**She means postponing repairs may leave or create a larger problem for the future.**
4	Why is "an umbrella with a price tag" a more nuanced description of the plan than simply calling it "a bargain" or "a burden"?	**It recognizes that the plan offers protection from flooding but costs money, which fits Ortiz's limited, reviewable one-year proposal.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At 3:15, students with no quiet place to work line up beside the library's locked glass doors. Keeping the room open is not a free convenience, it is a study lamp that requires someone to keep it lit. Fund a three-month after-school pilot until 5:00, then review attendance and staffing costs.

Accept interpretations that explain a phrase's connotations and connect those connotations to Ortiz's purpose or audience. For Part 3, accept varied topics if the response includes a concrete image, a nuanced tradeoff phrase, and a specific limited request.