Words That Work

Analyze how parts of speech create precise meaning in a model informational text.

12.L.V.2.d "Use knowledge of parts of speech to determine precise and effective words and phrases when constructing texts. (C)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline six precise action verbs. Circle six modifiers, including adjectives, adverbs, or prepositional phrases, that make an action or condition more exact.

Managing Fire on the Prairie

1 At dawn, a prairie crew traced a blackened line along the edge of a Kansas grassland. The crew did not set the entire field ablaze at once. Instead, trained burners lit narrow strips of dry grass when humidity, wind speed, and wind direction fell within the burn plan's limits. Low flames crept through last year's stems, leaving many deep-rooted native plants protected beneath the soil. A bright orange plume rose briefly, then thinned into a pale column above the open horizon. Nearby, a supervisor watched the fire's boundary with a radio and water tank.

2 Fire is not simply a destructive force in this ecosystem. Periodic, carefully planned burns reduce the thick layer of dead plant material that can smother emerging shoots. They also check the advance of shrubs and young trees, which can shade sun-loving grasses and wildflowers. Within weeks, new blades may push through the ash, and grazing animals often feed on the tender growth. The timing matters: land managers avoid nesting seasons for vulnerable birds and postpone a burn when conditions could carry flames beyond the intended area.

3 After a burn, ecologists measure change rather than relying on a dramatic photograph. They record the number of plant species in sample plots, estimate ground cover, and compare results across several years. In one plot, a researcher might note that little bluestem returned densely while a single invasive shrub appeared near a fence line. Such observations guide later decisions. A manager may schedule a smaller follow-up burn, remove shrubs by hand, or leave an unburned refuge where insects and other animals can shelter during the next season.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, why is the verb “lit” more precise than the general verb “started” would be?

2. What nouns does the hyphenated modifier “sun-loving” describe in paragraph 2? What condition does that modifier emphasize?

3. What information does the adverb “densely” add to the little bluestem's return in paragraph 3?

4. In paragraph 3, the phrase “by hand” contrasts with scheduling a follow-up burn. What difference in management approach does this phrase show?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences, 45 to 60 words total, about a real or imagined action that protects a local habitat. Use at least one precise action verb, one adjective before a noun, one adverb that modifies a verb, and one prepositional phrase that shows place or time.

ANSWER KEY

Words That Work

GRADE 12 · 12.L.V.2.d

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline six precise action verbs. Circle six modifiers, including adjectives, adverbs, or prepositional phrases, that make an action or condition more exact. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, why is the verb “lit” more precise than the general verb “started” would be?	**“Lit” shows that the burners ignited narrow strips of grass, rather than merely beginning the burn in an unspecified way.**
2	What nouns does the hyphenated modifier “sun-loving” describe in paragraph 2? What condition does that modifier emphasize?	**It describes grasses and wildflowers, and it emphasizes that they need sunlight and can be harmed by shade.**
3	What information does the adverb “densely” add to the little bluestem's return in paragraph 3?	**It indicates that little bluestem returned in close, abundant growth, not merely that it appeared again.**
4	In paragraph 3, the phrase “by hand” contrasts with scheduling a follow-up burn. What difference in management approach does this phrase show?	**It shows a targeted, manual removal of shrubs instead of using fire as the management method.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before spring rains, volunteers carefully removed tangled plastic from the creek bank behind our school. Their steady work reopened a narrow path for water, while a clearly marked collection station kept filled bags away from the storm drain on campus during the coming heavy-rain season.

Accept accurate explanations of how the selected verbs, modifiers, and phrases narrow or sharpen meaning in context. For the writing task, accept varied topics if the response has two sentences, 45 to 60 words, and includes all required parts of speech used effectively.