Words Around Water

Analyze how diction frames a public change for different audiences.

12.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 four words or phrases that shape how readers might understand the dam removal. Number them 1 through 4, then write a brief margin note naming the audience or purpose each phrase seems to serve.

The Alder Dam Debate

1 At the edge of Riverton, the Alder Dam has stood across the Alder River since 1928. This spring, the city will remove the aging structure after inspectors found cracks in its concrete spillway. A notice posted at the boat launch states, "River access will shift during the work period. Use the north ramp until further notice." The notice includes a map, a phone number, and dates for closing two riverside paths. On the opposite bank, orange signs mark equipment zones. Anglers and cyclists can still reach the park by following a detour beside the old mill pond.

2 At a council meeting, the project engineer called the removal "a controlled release of a river from an outdated barrier." She displayed drawings of the staged work, including sediment tests and a schedule for lowering the reservoir. A restaurant owner whose patio overlooks the water used another description. "For one season, we are watching our waterfront disappear," he told the council. He asked for signs directing visitors to open businesses. Several residents spoke about the muddy banks that may appear after the water level drops. Others brought photographs of a free-flowing reach upstream, where gravel bars and cottonwoods line the channel.

3 Two weeks later, a regional conservation group mailed a brochure calling the project "a reconnection, not a subtraction." Its cover showed salmon swimming beneath a bridge, although the brochure did not predict when fish populations might change. The city's construction contract used plainer terms, requiring crews to "remove, transport, and place" dam materials at approved sites. In an editorial, a local columnist described the project as "Riverton's test of patience." The article listed detours, business concerns, and possible long-term changes to the river corridor. City staff continued to use the phrase "dam removal" in meeting agendas and permit documents.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the notice's phrase "River access will shift" position the disruption differently from the later statement that two paths will close?

2. Compare "a controlled release of a river from an outdated barrier" with "watching our waterfront disappear." What does each phrase emphasize about the project?

3. Why might the conservation group call the project "a reconnection, not a subtraction"? Explain how the paired words guide readers' thinking.

4. What purpose is served by the contract's phrase "remove, transport, and place" instead of a more charged description such as the brochure's or editorial's language?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly two sentences, 20 to 30 words each, about a city converting an unused parking lot into a public garden. Write one sentence for nearby shop owners and one for a grant committee, using different diction to suit each audience and purpose.

ANSWER KEY

Words Around Water

GRADE 12 · 12.L.V.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four words or phrases that shape how readers might understand the dam removal. Number them 1 through 4, then write a brief margin note naming the audience or purpose each phrase seems to serve. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the notice's phrase "River access will shift" position the disruption differently from the later statement that two paths will close?	**"Shift" frames the change as a rerouting or adjustment, while "close" states a direct restriction on access.**
2	Compare "a controlled release of a river from an outdated barrier" with "watching our waterfront disappear." What does each phrase emphasize about the project?	**The engineer emphasizes planned management and liberation from an obsolete dam. The restaurant owner emphasizes immediate loss to a familiar place and its businesses.**
3	Why might the conservation group call the project "a reconnection, not a subtraction"? Explain how the paired words guide readers' thinking.	**The phrase presents dam removal as restoring connections in the river system rather than taking something away, countering a loss-centered view of the project.**
4	What purpose is served by the contract's phrase "remove, transport, and place" instead of a more charged description such as the brochure's or editorial's language?	**The contract uses precise, action-focused language to specify required work and material handling, not to persuade readers about the project's value.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

For nearby shop owners, construction will briefly reroute deliveries, while the garden's shaded seating and weekend foot traffic may bring more customers to the block. For the grant committee, this modest capital investment converts impermeable pavement into productive green infrastructure, improving stormwater absorption, neighborhood access to fresh produce, and community programming.

Accept well-supported interpretations that identify a phrase's likely effect, audience, or purpose and use passage context. For Part 3, accept varied wording if each sentence is 20 to 30 words and clearly adapts diction for the named audience.