Meaning Detectives

Use context clues and reference tools to understand new words.

3.L.V.3 "Meaning & Purpose: Make connections between words and phrases and use reference materials to determine or clarify word meanings in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each word that Mila needs to understand. Underline the nearby words that help explain each circled word, and number the reference materials she uses.

Mila at the Nature Center

1. On Saturday, Mila visited a nature center with her uncle. Near the door, a sign said, "Please observe, or watch carefully, the pond animals." Mila knew observe because the sign gave a short meaning after the comma. She looked for frogs, beetles, and tiny water skaters. Her uncle handed her a trail map with symbols for paths, restrooms, and picnic tables.

2. At the turtle tank, Mila read a card that used the word camouflage. The card explained that camouflage helps an animal blend in with its surroundings. Mila then checked the center's small field guide. In the guide's glossary, she found shell. It said a shell is a hard outer covering that protects some animals. Pictures helped her connect the words to what she saw.

3. Later, Mila heard a worker call an owl nocturnal. She used nearby words to guess that nocturnal meant active at night, since the worker said the owl rests during the day. To be sure, Mila used a dictionary on a tablet. The entry confirmed her idea and gave a sentence with nocturnal. Mila learned that clues and reference books can work together.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does observe mean in the sign?

2. Which nearby words help you figure out what nocturnal means?

3. What reference material did Mila use to find the meaning of shell?

4. Why did Mila use a dictionary after using nearby words to guess the meaning of nocturnal?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose one word that does not appear in the passage. Write two sentences. In the first sentence, use context clues to suggest the word's meaning. In the second sentence, name a dictionary or glossary you would use and write the meaning you found.

ANSWER KEY

Meaning Detectives

GRADE 3 · 3.L.V.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each word that Mila needs to understand. Underline the nearby words that help explain each circled word, and number the reference materials she uses. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does observe mean in the sign?	**to watch carefully**
2	Which nearby words help you figure out what nocturnal means?	**"the owl rests during the day"**
3	What reference material did Mila use to find the meaning of shell?	**the glossary in the field guide**
4	Why did Mila use a dictionary after using nearby words to guess the meaning of nocturnal?	**She used it to make sure, or confirm, that her guess was correct.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The sturdy bridge did not shake when five children walked across it. I checked a dictionary, which says sturdy means strong and not easily broken.

Accept answers that use nearby words or a reference material to clarify meaning. For the open synthesis task, accept any word not from the passage if the first sentence gives a clear clue and the second sentence names a reference source and gives an accurate meaning.