Tower Nest Voices

Word choice reveals literal facts and suggested attitudes.

9.L.V.3.b "Analyze relationships between words to determine connotative and denotative meanings for words and/or phrases across a variety of contexts. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three words or phrases that carry an attitude beyond their literal meaning. Circle nearby details that help you infer each phrase, then number each phrase and its clue with the same number.

Above the City

1 Each spring, a pair of peregrine falcons returns to the ledge of a downtown office tower. From the sidewalk, the birds may look like small marks against glass and stone. Up close, the ledge serves as a nest site, much like the cliff faces peregrines use elsewhere. The adults scrape a shallow hollow in gravel and lay eggs there. City workers place a camera near the nest but keep their distance. The building's residents share views of the chicks online, while the falcons scan the streets below for pigeons.

2 To the falcons, the tower is not a cold box of offices. It is a sturdy lookout, rising above a noisy flock of traffic and people. The birds claim the ledge each year, and their swift dives can turn an ordinary lunch break into a small spectacle. Yet the nest is not a show put on for crowds. Volunteers rope off part of the sidewalk because a protective adult may swoop near anyone who wanders too close. Their caution keeps the nest from becoming a stage.

3 Urban nests also tell a longer story about peregrines. By the 1960s, DDT had thinned the birds' eggshells, and peregrines disappeared from many areas of the United States. After restrictions on DDT and recovery work, populations grew. Today, a nest on a tower is one sign of that return. It does not erase the dangers birds still face in cities. Window collisions, loss of habitat, and harmful chemicals can still injure or kill birds. The falcons are survivors, and their presence draws attention to the work that remains.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what does the phrase "small marks against glass and stone" literally describe, and what feeling does it create?

2. Compare "cold box of offices" with "sturdy lookout" in paragraph 2. How does each phrase shape the reader's view of the tower?

3. What does the word "claim" suggest about the falcons' relationship to the ledge beyond simply returning to it?

4. How does the word "sign" in paragraph 3 shape the claim about peregrine recovery?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly two sentences about a local or familiar place. In the first sentence, describe it using denotative language. In the second sentence, use a connotative word or phrase for the place and explain the effect of that wording.

ANSWER KEY

Tower Nest Voices

GRADE 9 · 9.L.V.3.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three words or phrases that carry an attitude beyond their literal meaning. Circle nearby details that help you infer each phrase, then number each phrase and its clue with the same number. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does the phrase "small marks against glass and stone" literally describe, and what feeling does it create?	**It literally describes the distant falcons as seen from the sidewalk. It makes them seem tiny and easy to overlook beside the large building.**
2	Compare "cold box of offices" with "sturdy lookout" in paragraph 2. How does each phrase shape the reader's view of the tower?	**"Cold box of offices" makes the tower seem impersonal and unwelcoming. "Sturdy lookout" presents it as a secure, useful place for the falcons.**
3	What does the word "claim" suggest about the falcons' relationship to the ledge beyond simply returning to it?	**It suggests that the falcons treat the ledge as their territory and may defend it.**
4	How does the word "sign" in paragraph 3 shape the claim about peregrine recovery?	**It presents a tower nest as an indication that recovery has occurred, not as certainty that city conditions are safe for all birds.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The abandoned train station is a brick building with boarded windows beside the tracks. Calling it a silent sentinel makes it seem watchful and lonely, rather than simply unused.

Accept equivalent interpretations when students connect a word or phrase to details in the passage. For Part 3, accept varied places and connotative language if the first sentence is literal and the second explains the suggested attitude or feeling.