Words in the Heat

How word choice shapes an argument about city shade

9-10.RC.13 "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a nonfiction text, including figurative, connotative, denotative, and technical meanings..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the technical term, circle two words or phrases that shape how you feel about the heat, and number the two uses of "reflects" in the last paragraph to compare their meanings.

Who Gets the Shade?

1 At 3 p.m., the sidewalk outside a city library can feel like a griddle, while the tree-lined block behind it offers relief. Both places receive sunlight, but concrete and asphalt absorb much of its energy and release heat slowly. Trees provide shade and cool the air as water evaporates from their leaves. Scientists call the share of incoming sunlight a surface reflects its *albedo*. A pale roof usually has a higher albedo than dark pavement, so it can absorb less solar energy. The word is technical, but the difference is easy to feel while waiting for a bus.

2 On one block, a bus shelter has a roof but no shade over the line of people beside it. A resident calls the stop an "oven," not because it cooks anyone, but because the comparison makes an ordinary wait sound punishing. Across town, a landscaped courtyard stays cool enough for lunch outdoors. In a city newsletter, officials describe tree cover there as an "amenity," a word that suggests a pleasant extra. At the bus stop, however, shade is closer to basic protection. Calling it an amenity may soften the urgency of adding it where riders stand.

3 Some cities respond by planting street trees, installing shelters, and testing lighter paving materials. Each choice has limits: trees need water and space, and a light surface can produce glare. A city report might say a new roof "reflects" more sunlight, using the word to describe a physical effect. A budget also "reflects" priorities, but here the word means it reveals what leaders value. When a plan calls bus-stop shade an "essential service" rather than an "amenity," its language asks readers to judge the same investment differently. The pavement has not changed, but the argument about who deserves relief has.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does “albedo” mean in the first paragraph? Why is it more precise than calling a surface “bright”?

2. What does the resident mean by calling the bus stop an “oven”? How does that choice shape the tone?

3. How might calling shade an “amenity” instead of an “essential service” change a reader’s view of adding it at the bus stop?

4. Compare the two meanings of “reflects” in the last paragraph. What does the second use suggest about a city budget?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two original sentences proposing shade outside the library: make the first neutral and the second urgent, with a figurative phrase in the urgent version. Then write two sentences explaining how your word choices change the tone and might affect readers.

Words in the Heat

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the technical term, circle two words or phrases that shape how you feel about the heat, and number the two uses of "reflects" in the last paragraph to compare their meanings. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does "albedo" mean in the first paragraph? Why is it more precise than calling a surface "bright"?	**Albedo is the share of incoming sunlight a surface reflects. "Bright" describes how a surface looks, while "albedo" names a measurable property.**
2	What does the resident mean by calling the bus stop an "oven"? How does that choice shape the tone?	**The resident means the stop feels intensely hot, not that it cooks people. "Oven" makes the wait sound punishing and gives the description an urgent tone.**
3	How might calling shade an "amenity" instead of an "essential service" change a reader's view of adding it at the bus stop?	**"Amenity" suggests a pleasant extra, so adding shade may seem less urgent. "Essential service" presents it as a basic need.**
4	Compare the two meanings of "reflects" in the last paragraph. What does the second use suggest about a city budget?	**A roof physically sends sunlight back. A budget reveals leaders' priorities, suggesting that spending choices show what they value.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The library could install a shade canopy along its sidewalk. The library should install a shade canopy before its sidewalk becomes a sun-baked gauntlet for visitors. "Could install" presents the idea as one option. "Should" and "sun-baked gauntlet" make the walk sound difficult and may persuade readers that shade is needed soon.

Accept accurate explanations in students' own words. For Part 3, look for two distinct tones, an original figurative phrase, and a specific explanation of its effect on readers.