Words at Work

Sort what words mean in a story.

RL.3.4 "Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language, including but not limited to idioms and hyperboles, and describe how those words and phrases shape meaning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

LITERAL LANGUAGE

The words mean exactly what they say. The action could really happen.

An otter swam in the pond.

NONLITERAL LANGUAGE

The words do not mean exactly what they say. They can help you picture a feeling or understand it.

My backpack weighs a ton!

1 SORT

8 items

Read each sentence, then circle LITERAL or NONLITERAL for the bold words.

1.	1. At sunrise, the rooster **crowed on the fence**.	LITERAL NONLITERAL
2.	2. The fox **dug a hole** near the tree.	LITERAL NONLITERAL
3.	3. Nina **spilled the beans** when she told Dad about his surprise party.	LITERAL NONLITERAL
4.	4. Maya **carried a stack of books** to her desk.	LITERAL NONLITERAL
5.	5. After ten minutes, Eli said the walk **took forever**.	LITERAL NONLITERAL
6.	6. At the scary part of the story, **my heart jumped out of my chest**.	LITERAL NONLITERAL
7.	7. The baker **placed the pie in the oven**.	LITERAL NONLITERAL
8.	8. A snail **crawled across the garden stone**.	LITERAL NONLITERAL

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Part 2: Pick two items, one from each group, and explain how you knew. Part 3: Write one new sentence with literal language and one with nonliteral language.

LITERAL _____

NONLITERAL _____

CHALLENGE

Choose one nonliteral sentence from the sort. Tell what the bold words mean and how they help you understand a feeling.

ANSWER KEY # Words at Work

GRADE 3 · RL.3.4

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	1. At sunrise, the rooster **crowed on the fence**.	**LITERAL**	A rooster can crow while standing on a fence.
2	2. The fox **dug a hole** near the tree.	**LITERAL**	A fox can dig a hole.
3	3. Nina **spilled the beans** when she told Dad about his surprise party.	**NONLITERAL**	Nina revealed a secret. She did not spill food.
4	4. Maya **carried a stack of books** to her desk.	**LITERAL**	Maya could carry books to a desk.
5	5. After ten minutes, Eli said the walk **took forever**.	**NONLITERAL**	The walk felt long to Eli, but it lasted ten minutes.
6	6. At the scary part of the story, **my heart jumped out of my chest**.	**NONLITERAL**	The speaker felt suddenly frightened. Their heart did not leave their chest.
7	7. The baker **placed the pie in the oven**.	**LITERAL**	A baker can put a pie in an oven.
8	8. A snail **crawled across the garden stone**.	**LITERAL**	A snail can crawl across a stone.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **LITERAL**: A crab hid beneath a rock.
- **NONLITERAL**: My homework pile reached the moon.

Challenge: In item 6, the speaker felt suddenly scared. The words make that fear seem strong.

For Part 2, students should explain both choices. For example, item 2 describes something a fox can do, while item 3 means Nina told a secret.