Words That Clarify

Precise vocabulary for explaining a complex proposal

12.4.W.1 "Students will use precise, grade-level vocabulary in writing to clearly communicate complex ideas."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three precise words or phrases in the passage. For each one, circle a nearby detail that shows what it means, then number the word or phrase and its matching detail.

Shade at the Bus Stop

1 On a July afternoon, two bus stops on the same avenue can feel strikingly different. At one stop, a tree canopy intercepts sunlight before it reaches the pavement. At the other, unshaded concrete absorbs energy and later releases heat. This contrast is not merely aesthetic: shade can reduce a rider's exposure to direct sunlight and to heat radiating from nearby surfaces. A thermometer reporting air temperature, however, would not capture every part of that experience. By distinguishing air temperature from heat exposure, a city planner can describe the problem more accurately than by calling one stop "hotter."

2 Planting a tree beside every stop sounds simple, but a sapling cannot provide the immediate shade of a mature tree. Its survival also depends on sufficient soil space, water, and care, especially during establishment. In a narrow sidewalk, roots may have insufficient room, while a poorly placed trunk could obstruct a wheelchair route. A practical plan might pair temporary shade structures with long-term planting. The word "temporary" signals that a structure addresses present exposure, while "long-term" makes clear that tree growth is a gradual strategy. Both measures require upkeep, but they operate on different schedules.

3 Deciding which stops receive improvements first introduces another question: allocation. If crews work only where planting is easiest, stops used by riders with little access to other transportation may remain exposed. A city could instead compare rider counts, existing shade, and sidewalk constraints before setting priorities. Those measures would not erase every trade-off; a crowded stop may lack room for a tree but still accommodate a shade structure. Describing that choice as a trade-off, rather than a failure, shows that two legitimate goals can conflict. Precise language helps residents evaluate both the benefit and the limitation of a proposal.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why is "heat exposure" more precise than "air temperature" when describing a rider's experience at these stops?

2. What distinction do "temporary" and "long-term" make between the two shade measures in paragraph 2?

3. Replace "young trees need help" with a more precise sentence based on paragraph 2.

4. In paragraph 3, what different parts of the city's decision do "allocation" and "trade-off" name?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

At your school cafeteria, one of two checkout stations closes while students are still in line. Write one 75- to 100-word paragraph proposing a change. Use at least three precise terms of your own to explain the cause, your proposed adjustment, and a possible limitation.

ANSWER KEY

Words That Clarify

GRADE 12 · 12.4.W.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three precise words or phrases in the passage. For each one, circle a nearby detail that shows what it means, then number the word or phrase and its matching detail. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why is "heat exposure" more precise than "air temperature" when describing a rider's experience at these stops?	**Heat exposure includes direct sunlight and heat radiating from nearby surfaces, which an air-temperature reading does not fully capture.**
2	What distinction do "temporary" and "long-term" make between the two shade measures in paragraph 2?	**A temporary structure addresses present exposure; long-term planting provides shade gradually as trees grow.**
3	Replace "young trees need help" with a more precise sentence based on paragraph 2.	**Saplings need sufficient soil space, water, and care during establishment.**
4	In paragraph 3, what different parts of the city's decision do "allocation" and "trade-off" name?	**Allocation concerns which stops receive improvements first. A trade-off occurs when two goals, such as serving a crowded stop and finding room for a tree, conflict.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When one of two checkout stations closes during the lunch rush, the cafeteria's checkout capacity drops while demand remains high. That mismatch creates a bottleneck, leaving less time for students to eat. The school could stagger the stations' closing times so both remain open until the longest line has cleared. This adjustment would distribute service more evenly without requiring new equipment. Staffing is a constraint, however: keeping the second station open may delay other duties. Administrators should compare line lengths before and after the schedule change to see whether the benefit outweighs that cost.

Accept other accurate passage-based distinctions and precise replacements. For Part 3, look for a clear cause, a feasible adjustment, a limitation, and at least three terms that add specific meaning rather than merely sounding formal.