Words That Work

Study precise word choices in a model report

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

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four specific nouns and circle four precise verbs in the report. Choose words that help you picture how the rain garden was built or how it worked.

A Garden for Rain

1. After a heavy rain, water pooled beside the school's back entrance. Students stepped around the puddles, but the bigger problem was harder to see: runoff swept loose soil into a nearby storm drain. Our environmental club proposed a rain garden, a shallow planted area that would collect water before it reached the drain. We chose a low spot ten steps from the entrance, where the ground already sloped away from the building. That location would help direct water into the garden without sending it toward the school.

2. On planting day, volunteers loosened the packed soil and mixed in compost. They shaped a shallow basin, then covered the surface with mulch to reduce erosion. Rather than planting a row of identical flowers, the club selected native grasses and flowering plants suited to local conditions. Their roots would help water soak into the ground, while the stems would slow the flow across the surface. A narrow stone border marked the garden's edge so walkers could avoid crushing young shoots.

3. The first storm tested our work. Water streamed from the walkway, entered the basin, and spread across the mulch instead of rushing toward the drain. By the next morning, the standing water had soaked into the soil. The club photographed the site and recorded where small channels had formed near the stone border. At our next meeting, we planned to add more mulch in that spot. A rain garden does not erase every puddle, but careful observation can help us improve its design.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what term names the water moving across the ground toward the drain? Why is it clearer than calling the water "stuff"?

2. In paragraph 2, replace "put a material on top" with the report's precise wording. What was the material meant to reduce?

3. In paragraph 3, which verb shows how water moved from the walkway? Why does it work better than "went"?

4. Revise this vague sentence using two details from paragraph 3 without copying a full sentence: "They checked a place where something happened."

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four or five sentences describing how you organize a crowded backpack before class. Use at least three precise nouns and two precise verbs, and underline those five words.

ANSWER KEY

Words That Work

GRADE 8 · 8.4.W.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four specific nouns and circle four precise verbs in the report. Choose words that help you picture how the rain garden was built or how it worked. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what term names the water moving across the ground toward the drain? Why is it clearer than calling the water "stuff"?	**Runoff names the water moving over the ground toward the drain. "Stuff" does not tell the reader what is moving.**
2	In paragraph 2, replace "put a material on top" with the report's precise wording. What was the material meant to reduce?	**The volunteers "covered the surface with mulch" to reduce erosion.**
3	In paragraph 3, which verb shows how water moved from the walkway? Why does it work better than "went"?	**"Streamed" suggests water flowing in a current, while "went" does not show how it moved.**
4	Revise this vague sentence using two details from paragraph 3 without copying a full sentence: "They checked a place where something happened."	**The club recorded small channels near the stone border.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Before class, I unzip my backpack and sort the loose papers on my desk. I slide homework into a blue folder and place it beside my math notebook. I drop stray pens into a small pouch so they cannot snag the zipper. With the heaviest books at the back, I can find what I need without emptying the whole bag.

For the marking job, accept specific nouns such as "basin" or "mulch" and precise verbs such as "loosened" or "streamed." Accept other accurate revisions in question 4 that use at least two details from paragraph 3.