

Meaning in the Archive

Build academic and subject vocabulary through inference and verification.

10.RV.1 "Vocabulary Development and Word Analysis Develop and accurately use general academic and content-specific vocabulary through reading, discussing, and writing about grade-level texts and topics..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read paragraphs 1-2 with paragraph 3 covered. For questions 1-2, infer from clues first; then uncover the reference to check your meanings. Complete questions 3-4 afterward. Discuss one uncertain meaning with a partner.

The Uncertain Letter: An Original Fictional Scene

- ① The museum's intern found a letter attributed to a famous abolitionist in a box donated by a local family. Its provenance was incomplete: the file identified the donor but did not explain who had owned the letter before 1950. The curator would not authenticate it merely because the signature resembled a known example. She wanted paper analysis and a documented ownership history before calling it genuine. The exhibit label therefore remained provisional. Instead of declaring an exciting discovery, it described an object whose authorship was still being investigated. The intern initially mistook the cautious label for a rejection of the donation.
- ② The curator explained that skepticism was different from cynicism. A skeptical researcher asks what evidence could justify a claim and is willing to be persuaded; a cynical observer might assume that the donor wanted publicity regardless of the evidence. Calling the curator cynical would unfairly imply a distrust of motives that her questions did not establish. A misattribution could also spread quickly if a visitor repeated an uncertain label as fact. "We need a paper trail, not a leap of faith," she said. The trail meant linked records of ownership, not loose sheets across the floor. The intern rewrote the label to distinguish a plausible possibility from a verified conclusion.

- ③ Reference check: provenance is an object's origin or history of ownership. Authenticate means establish that something is genuine. Provisional describes an arrangement or judgment that is temporary or awaits confirmation. Attribution assigns authorship or credit; misattribution assigns it incorrectly. The prefix mis- signals error. Skeptical means questioning or doubtful; cynical can suggest distrust of people's sincerity or motives. In this scene, paper trail figuratively means records that let someone trace an object's history. A leap of faith means accepting something without sufficient proof. These concise teaching definitions apply to the senses used here; they do not list every dictionary sense.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

- ① Infer provenance and authenticate from paragraph 1. Give one clue for each; check the reference and record corrections or confirmations.

- ② Infer misattribution using the base word and prefix. Explain the possible mistake in this scene, then verify your meaning.

- ③ Compare skeptical and cynical. Explain why substituting cynical for skeptical would change the judgment of the curator.

- 4** Explain paper trail and leap of faith in context. How does their contrast express the curator's standard for accepting a claim?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write an 80-110-word label for a different fictional object whose origin is uncertain. Accurately use provenance, authenticate, provisional and misattribution. Include a cautious claim, a missing piece of evidence and a next investigative step. Underline the target words. After partner feedback, improve one use; later retrieve the meanings.

Apply and revise

Write your label. Have a partner question one use; revise it in place or explain below why it is accurate.

Check and retrieve

Record the partner’s question and your response. At the next class, cover the text: define three target words from memory, then check and correct or confirm them.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Read paragraphs 1-2 with paragraph 3 covered. For questions 1-2, infer from clues first; then uncover the reference to check your meanings. Complete questions 3-4 afterward. Discuss one uncertain meaning with a partner. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Infer provenance and authenticate from paragraph 1. Give one clue for each; check the reference and record corrections or confirmations.	The missing ownership history suggests provenance means origin or ownership history. Calling the letter genuine only after further checks suggests authenticate means establish genuineness. Both agree with the reference.
2	Infer misattribution using the base word and prefix. Explain the possible mistake in this scene, then verify your meaning.	Attribution assigns authorship; mis- makes that assignment incorrect. A visitor could credit the letter to the abolitionist when authorship remains unverified. The reference confirms the meaning.
3	Compare skeptical and cynical. Explain why substituting cynical for skeptical would change the judgment of the curator.	Skeptical describes questions about the evidence. Cynical could imply that the curator assumes the donor has selfish motives. Her stated request for analysis does not establish that distrust, so the substitution adds an unsupported negative judgment.
4	Explain paper trail and leap of faith in context. How does their contrast express the curator's standard for accepting a claim?	A paper trail is a connected documentary history, whereas a leap of faith accepts the claim without enough proof. The curator wants traceable evidence before authenticating the letter.

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

This silver medal may have belonged to a local athlete, but its provenance remains uncertain. A donation record names its most recent owner without identifying earlier owners. We cannot authenticate the claimed connection from an engraved initial alone. This provisional label records a possibility while research continues; it does not confirm who won or wore the medal. To prevent misattribution, the museum will compare the inscription with competition records and seek dated family photographs. The object can be displayed as an unresolved investigation while its ownership history is examined.

Partner question: Does authenticate mean simply guess? Response: No; the label says the initial alone cannot establish the connection. Retrieval: provenance = origin or ownership history; provisional = awaiting confirmation; misattribution = incorrect assignment of authorship or credit. Check: confirmed.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT NOTES

The label model is 89 words, excluding the partner/retrieval example. Score accurate meanings and context, not decorative use of impressive words. Each learner infers, verifies, discusses, writes, revises or justifies, and later retrieves. Accept reasonable cautions and investigative steps without requiring outside research. The museum scene and model are original fiction. Reference senses: dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/provenance and [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authenticate](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authenticate); other definitions are concise teaching paraphrases. Allow one class plus a short next-class check.