Labels at Stake

How word histories and parts shape a debate

11-12.L.5.b "Analyze word relationships (morphology, etymology, linguistics) and their role in creating nuanced meaning."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four labels used for the library's choices, then circle any prefixes or suffixes in those labels. Notice how each part changes what the label suggests.

What Should We Call the Display?

1 At a school library meeting, students debate a display of books about local protests. The librarian proposes to *curate* the display, placing firsthand accounts beside later histories. A student objects that any adult choice could become *censorship*. Their disagreement turns on words, not just books. *Curate* traces to the Latin *curare*, meaning "to care for." In a museum or library, the word can suggest thoughtful attention to what people encounter. Yet it does not guarantee fairness. A carefully arranged display could still leave out a crucial voice, even if its organizer calls the work curation.

2 Another student proposes *preselection*: a committee would choose titles before the public sees the list. The prefix *pre-* means "before," so *preselection* shifts attention from the choices themselves to their timing. That shift matters when people want to know who had a chance to object. Meanwhile, *censor* comes from the Latin *censere*, meaning "to assess." Its descendant *censorship* usually suggests the suppression of expression, not simply an evaluation. The suffix *-ship* helps name a practice or condition. Calling the committee's work censorship would therefore make a stronger charge than calling it preselection.

3 The group finally writes a policy: the librarian may *select* books for a small display but must publish the full list of suggested titles. Students may then request additions. One student calls this *reconsideration*, since *re-* signals doing something again; another prefers *revision*, which suggests changing the result, not merely thinking again. Neither word proves that a change will happen. The group chooses "requests for reconsideration" because it promises a second look without promising every requested addition. In this debate, word parts and histories do not settle the policy, but they reveal what each label implies.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the origin of *curate* shape its meaning in the debate, and why does that meaning not settle the fairness question?

2. What does *pre-* add to *selection*, and what question does that addition bring into focus?

3. How does the meaning of *censorship* go beyond the meaning of its Latin source, *censere*? Why is it a stronger label than *preselection*?

4. Why does the group choose *reconsideration* rather than *revision* for its policy? Explain the difference each word suggests.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a specific change to a community garden's rules. In three or four sentences, compare two plausible labels for the change, analyze a prefix, suffix, or word origin in one label, and explain which label fits better.

ANSWER KEY

Labels at Stake

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.L.5.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four labels used for the library's choices, then circle any prefixes or suffixes in those labels. Notice how each part changes what the label suggests. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the origin of *curate* shape its meaning in the debate, and why does that meaning not settle the fairness question?	**Its Latin source means "to care for," suggesting thoughtful attention. A display can be thoughtfully arranged and still omit a crucial voice.**
2	What does *pre-* add to *selection*, and what question does that addition bring into focus?	**It means "before" and emphasizes when titles are chosen. That raises the question of whether people can object before the choices are made public.**
3	How does the meaning of *censorship* go beyond the meaning of its Latin source, *censere*? Why is it a stronger label than *preselection*?	***Censere* means "to assess," while *censorship* usually suggests suppressing expression. It charges the committee with more than choosing titles in advance.**
4	Why does the group choose *reconsideration* rather than *revision* for its policy? Explain the difference each word suggests.	***Reconsideration* promises another look, as *re-* suggests, without promising a change. *Revision* suggests that the result will change.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The garden will allow compost drop-offs only on Saturdays instead of every day. Calling this a "restriction" highlights what visitors lose, while calling it a "rescheduling" highlights a change in timing. The prefix *re-* in *rescheduling* suggests arranging the schedule again, but that label hides the lost access. *Restriction* fits better because the new rule limits when people may use the site.

Accept answers that connect a word part or origin to a specific difference in meaning, even if students phrase the implication differently. For Part 3, the invented rule and both labels should be plausible, and the preferred label should match the student's reasoning.