Words That Hold Water

Precise vocabulary and a measured voice in technical writing

11-12.WHST.2.d "Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic. Establish a clear voice."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three technical terms that explain what happens to water, circle two phrases that limit a claim, and number the steps water takes through the rain garden. Use your marks to notice how precise language keeps the explanation accurate.

What a Rain Garden Can Do

1. After a heavy rain, water from roofs and pavement flows into storm drains instead of soaking into the ground. In a neighborhood with older pipes, that sudden flow can overwhelm a drainage system and leave intersections flooded. A rain garden offers one small intervention: a shallow planted depression that collects runoff from a nearby hard surface. Its soil lets some water infiltrate, while plants help slow the flow. Calling the garden a "flood cure" would overstate its reach. It handles water from a limited drainage area, not every street in a neighborhood.

2. Consider a school that directs water from one section of its parking lot toward a rain garden. During a storm, runoff enters through a curb opening and spreads across the planted basin. Water held at the surface can infiltrate the soil over time, provided the soil can absorb it. An overflow outlet gives excess water a route away when the basin fills. These details matter because "the garden absorbs rain" hides two distinct processes: runoff first collects, and then some of it enters the soil. The outlet also makes clear that storage has a limit.

3. A careful report would describe what observers measured rather than claim that the project ended flooding. For example, a student team might record the depth of standing water beside the curb before and after installation, using the same location and similar storm conditions. Even then, other changes, such as a cleared storm drain, could affect the result. A credible voice is neither promotional nor dismissive: it states the garden's intended function, names the observation, and distinguishes a possible contribution from proof of a cause. That distinction helps readers evaluate a proposed drainage change without mistaking confidence for evidence.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why is “runoff” more precise than “rain” when describing the water entering the garden?

2. How do “collects” and “infiltrate” name different steps in the garden’s operation?

3. Find one phrase that limits what the garden can do. Explain which overstatement it prevents.

4. Why would a report claiming that the garden “ended flooding” have a less credible voice than the passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences for a school report about this separate situation: On Monday, 40 of 120 apples served at lunch were left uneaten; on Friday, after apples were moved to the front of the serving line, 20 of 120 were left uneaten. Use at least two precise measurement or food-service terms, maintain a measured voice, and explain why these observations do not prove the move caused the change.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.WHST.2.d

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three technical terms that explain what happens to water, circle two phrases that limit a claim, and number the steps water takes through the rain garden. Use your marks to notice how precise language keeps the explanation accurate. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why is "runoff" more precise than "rain" when describing the water entering the garden?	**Runoff identifies water flowing off a hard surface, such as the parking lot, rather than all rain that falls.**
2	How do "collects" and "infiltrate" name different steps in the garden's operation?	**The garden first collects runoff at the surface. Some of that water later infiltrates, or enters, the soil.**
3	Find one phrase that limits what the garden can do. Explain which overstatement it prevents.	**"A limited drainage area" prevents the claim that one garden manages water from every street. Accept "some water" or the overflow outlet as other supported examples.**
4	Why would a report claiming that the garden "ended flooding" have a less credible voice than the passage?	**The passage gives no measurements proving flooding ended and notes that another change, such as a cleared drain, could affect results. Claiming a proven outcome would sound promotional rather than measured.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On Monday, 40 of 120 apples served at lunch were left uneaten, compared with 20 of 120 on Friday. The number of uneaten apples fell by 20 after staff moved the apples to the front of the serving line. This comparison records a change in food waste, but it does not establish that the new placement caused it. A different menu or group of students could also have influenced how many apples students ate.

Accept equivalent technical terms and accurately qualified claims supported by the passage. For Part 3, check for four sentences, accurate quantities, at least two precise terms, and a clear distinction between an observed change and a proven cause.