Words That Guide

How precise vocabulary shapes what readers understand

9-10.L.6.b "Understand the importance of vocabulary knowledge in comprehension or expression."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the original and revised garden signs, then circle the words that change what readers understand about the plants.

The Garden Sign

1. At an Ohio neighborhood garden, a volunteer drafted a sign for a spring planting day: "Help us fill the new bed with native flowers, including wild bergamot and English lavender." The sign sounded inviting, but one word changed what readers would expect. Wild bergamot is native to Ohio. English lavender comes from the Mediterranean region, so it is not native to Ohio. A visitor hoping to plant only local species could arrive with the wrong idea. The volunteer did not need to remove lavender; she needed to describe the planting accurately.

2. The volunteer tried a second sign: "Plant Ohio-native wild bergamot alongside English lavender for pollinators." This wording kept the invitation while making the list more precise. Another helper suggested calling the lavender "invasive" to warn people that it was not local. That term would create a different error: a non-native plant is not automatically invasive. Invasive describes a species that spreads and causes harm in a new environment; the sign offered no evidence of that. Careful vocabulary matters because readers may use a garden notice to decide what to buy, plant, or avoid.

3. On the finished sign, the heading read, "A bed for pollinators," above the revised invitation. The heading tells readers the purpose of the bed, but it does not claim that every plant has the same origin. A shopper seeking Ohio-native plants can choose the bergamot; someone seeking flowers visited by bees can consider both. If the sign had said only "pollinator-friendly," that shopper would still need more information about origin. A few well-chosen words let the garden welcome helpers without sending them away with a mistaken picture of the project.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What might a visitor misunderstand about English lavender after reading the first sign? Explain which word causes the confusion.

2. How does the revised sign help someone who wants to plant only Ohio-native flowers?

3. Why would calling the English lavender "invasive" give readers the wrong idea?

4. What information does "pollinator-friendly" leave out for a shopper seeking Ohio-native plants?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a two-sentence notice for a one-day community art display. Tell visitors they may leave artwork for the day but must collect it by 5 p.m. Then add one sentence comparing a precise word in your notice with a misleading word and explaining what readers might misunderstand.

Words That Guide

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the original and revised garden signs, then circle the words that change what readers understand about the plants. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What might a visitor misunderstand about English lavender after reading the first sign? Explain which word causes the confusion.	**The visitor might think English lavender is native to Ohio because "native" appears to describe every flower in the list. The passage says English lavender comes from the Mediterranean region.**
2	How does the revised sign help someone who wants to plant only Ohio-native flowers?	**It identifies wild bergamot as Ohio-native without making that claim about English lavender, so the reader can choose the bergamot.**
3	Why would calling the English lavender "invasive" give readers the wrong idea?	**"Invasive" means a species spreads and causes harm in a new environment. The sign offers no evidence that the lavender does so; being non-native is not enough.**
4	What information does "pollinator-friendly" leave out for a shopper seeking Ohio-native plants?	**It does not say which plants are native to Ohio. The shopper needs the more specific wording to distinguish wild bergamot from English lavender.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Lend your artwork for Saturday's community display. Please collect it by 5 p.m. Calling the artwork a donation instead of a loan might make visitors think the organizers will keep it.

Accept answers that connect a word choice to a specific inference a reader could make. For Part 3, the notice must address visitors directly, state the 5 p.m. collection time, and distinguish temporary use from permanent giving.