# Clues Before Chaos

Use nearby details and sentence structure to clarify meaning.

**12.RV.1.B** "Use context and sentence structure to clarify the meanings of words and phrases."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline four vocabulary words or phrases whose meanings become clear from nearby context. Circle the words, punctuation, or sentence patterns that give each clue.

### Warning Signs at Mount St. Helens

1 On May 18, 1980, Mount St. Helens in Washington erupted after weeks of warning signs. Scientists had recorded hundreds of small earthquakes, or seismic tremors, beneath the volcano. Those tremors were not a guarantee of an eruption, but they were precursors, events that come before a larger event and may signal it. Surveyors also saw the mountain's north side bulge outward. The bulge expanded rapidly, while steam vents appeared near the summit. Together, these changes gave researchers evidence that pressure was building inside the volcano, even though they could not predict the exact moment of failure.

2 Before the blast, agencies established a restricted zone, an area where public entry was limited because conditions could become dangerous. The boundary was revised as new measurements arrived. This precaution frustrated some residents and business owners, since roads and recreation sites closed, yet it reduced the number of people near the mountain. Officials did not claim the boundary would make anyone safe everywhere. Instead, they used it to keep visitors away from the most exposed slopes while scientists assessed changing hazards. In this setting, restricted means controlled for safety, not simply difficult to reach.

3 At 8:32 a.m., a magnitude 5.1 earthquake triggered the collapse of Mount St. Helens' north flank. A debris avalanche, a fast-moving mass of rock, ice, and soil, swept into the valley. The eruption that followed was catastrophic: it caused widespread destruction rather than a minor, local disturbance. A lateral blast traveled sideways from the volcano, flattening forests across hundreds of square kilometers. Melted snow and ice mixed with sediment to form lahars, volcanic mudflows that raced down river channels. These processes show why scientists study both the volcano's summit and the landscapes surrounding it.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does seismic mean in the phrase “seismic tremors”? Which nearby words help you determine the meaning?

2. What are precursors? Explain how the sentence structure after the word clarifies its meaning.

3. What does restricted mean in “restricted zone”? Use details from the paragraph to support your answer.

4. What does catastrophic mean in the third paragraph? How does the contrast in the sentence help clarify it?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences about a real event or process. In the first sentence, use one precise academic word that a reader might not know and include a context clue. In the second sentence, use an appositive, definition, or contrast to make that word even clearer.

ANSWER KEY

# Clues Before Chaos

GRADE 12 · 12.RV.1.B

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four vocabulary words or phrases whose meanings become clear from nearby context. Circle the words, punctuation, or sentence patterns that give each clue. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What does seismic mean in the phrase "seismic tremors"? Which nearby words help you determine the meaning? | **Seismic means related to earthquakes. The passage calls the tremors "small earthquakes."** |
| 2 | What are precursors? Explain how the sentence structure after the word clarifies its meaning. | **Precursors are earlier events or signs that may signal a larger event. The comma phrase directly defines them as events that come before a larger event.** |
| 3 | What does restricted mean in "restricted zone"? Use details from the paragraph to support your answer. | **Restricted means that access was limited or controlled for safety. The paragraph explains that public entry was limited and that roads and recreation sites closed.** |
| 4 | What does catastrophic mean in the third paragraph? How does the contrast in the sentence help clarify it? | **Catastrophic means causing widespread, severe destruction. The sentence contrasts it with "a minor, local disturbance."** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

During the drought, the reservoir reached a critical threshold, the point at which a small additional loss could cause serious consequences. Its declining water level was not merely inconvenient; it threatened the city's supply.

Accept answers that use nearby definitions, appositives, contrasts, or specific details to explain the target word. For the open task, accept varied topics and vocabulary if both sentences provide accurate, meaningful clues to the chosen word's meaning.