Influence Has Shades

Track how context changes the meaning of closely related words.

12.RV.1.D "Analyze the nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations (e.g., assertive, aggressive, domineering)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle assertive, aggressive, and domineering each time they appear. Underline the actions or reactions that show why each word fits its speaker.

A Debate Over the Warehouse

1 At a public meeting in Harbor City, residents debated how to use an empty warehouse near the river. Maya Chen, a college student, spoke first. She was assertive: she stated that the building should become a youth arts center and supported her claim with survey results. She paused when another resident raised a concern about parking, then answered with a proposal for bus passes and bicycle racks. Maya did not interrupt anyone or treat disagreement as disrespect. Her firm tone helped listeners notice her evidence. Several residents who favored other plans still said she had made a clear case, even though they did not change their votes.

2 Later, council member Victor Hale answered Maya. He was aggressive, not merely assertive. He called competing proposals "ridiculous," cut off a speaker before she finished, and demanded an immediate vote. Victor also pointed to real concerns about the warehouse's leaking roof, but his combative language made some people defensive. He leaned across the table, repeatedly challenged the chair's timing, and treated questions as obstacles rather than requests for information. After the meeting, one resident said Victor had pushed the issue forward, but another said he had pushed people away. The disagreement continued in the hallway after Victor left.

3 By the final vote, neighborhood association president Elena Ruiz had become domineering. She assigned speaking order without consulting the group, dismissed a volunteer's questions, and announced that the association would endorse her preferred plan. Unlike Maya, Elena did not invite reasons that might change her mind. Unlike Victor, she was not mainly trying to defeat an opponent in a heated exchange. When two members asked to delay the endorsement, Elena said their committee roles could be reconsidered. The room fell silent. A member later noted that Elena had acted as if authority belonged to her alone, although the association had never granted her that power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do Maya's actions show assertiveness rather than aggressiveness? Use two details from the passage.

2. What negative meaning does aggressive add to Victor's behavior that assertive would not add? Support your answer with one detail.

3. Why is domineering a more precise word for Elena than aggressive?

4. Victor raises a real concern about the leaking roof. Why does this valid concern not make aggressive an inaccurate word for him?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70-90-word scene about a group making a decision. Use assertive, aggressive, and domineering correctly, and show through actions why each word fits a different person. End by comparing how the three people seek influence.

ANSWER KEY

Influence Has Shades

GRADE 12 · 12.RV.1.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle assertive, aggressive, and domineering each time they appear. Underline the actions or reactions that show why each word fits its speaker. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Maya's actions show assertiveness rather than aggressiveness? Use two details from the passage.	**Maya supports her position with survey results and responds to a parking concern with a proposal. She does not interrupt others or treat disagreement as disrespect.**
2	What negative meaning does aggressive add to Victor's behavior that assertive would not add? Support your answer with one detail.	**Aggressive suggests hostility or attack toward others. Victor calls other proposals "ridiculous" and cuts off a speaker.**
3	Why is domineering a more precise word for Elena than aggressive?	**Domineering emphasizes excessive control over people or decisions. Elena controls speaking order, announces an endorsement without consultation, and threatens to reconsider members' roles.**
4	Victor raises a real concern about the leaking roof. Why does this valid concern not make aggressive an inaccurate word for him?	**A speaker can make a valid point while behaving aggressively. Victor delivers his concern through combative language, interruptions, and demands.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

During a lab-planning session, Noor was assertive when she proposed testing the water samples twice and explained how duplicate trials would improve the data. Marcus became aggressive when he mocked another group's method and spoke over its members. The team leader seemed domineering when she reassigned tasks without discussion and refused to let anyone revise her schedule. Each student wanted the experiment to succeed, but their ways of seeking influence affected the group differently.

Accept reasonable wording when students identify the key distinctions: assertive is firm and respectful, aggressive is hostile or confrontational, and domineering involves excessive control. For the open task, accept varied settings if the actions and comparison accurately support all three word choices.