Otters and Clues

Use nearby details to unlock tricky words.

4.RV.1.H "Use strategies to infer word meanings."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each word whose meaning is explained or hinted at by nearby words. Circle the words that give you a clue to each meaning.

Sea Otters in the Kelp

1. On a rocky California coast, sea otters float among thick beds of kelp. Their fur traps air, which helps them stay buoyant, or able to float, in cold water. An otter may wrap itself in long kelp strands before resting. The strand works like a loose rope, keeping the animal from drifting away while it sleeps.

2. Otters often eat hard-shelled animals, such as clams, crabs, and sea urchins. To open a meal, an otter may place a rock on its chest and strike the shell against it. This clever tool use can crack the shell. A hungry otter must be persistent, trying again and again when a shell does not break at first.

3. Sea otters are important to kelp forests. When otters eat many sea urchins, fewer urchins chew on kelp. With more kelp standing, fish and other animals can hide and find food there. In some places, scientists work to protect otters because a healthy otter group can help the whole forest ecosystem, a community of living things and their surroundings.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what does buoyant mean? Which words help you infer its meaning?

2. What does drifting away mean in paragraph 1? Use the kelp strand detail to help you.

3. In paragraph 2, what does persistent mean? What nearby words give the clue?

4. What does ecosystem mean in paragraph 3?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences about an animal. Use one challenging word, then add clues that help a reader infer its meaning. Underline the challenging word and circle the clue words.

ANSWER KEY

Otters and Clues

GRADE 4 · 4.RV.1.H

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each word whose meaning is explained or hinted at by nearby words. Circle the words that give you a clue to each meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does buoyant mean? Which words help you infer its meaning?	**Buoyant means able to float. The clue is "or able to float."**
2	What does drifting away mean in paragraph 1? Use the kelp strand detail to help you.	**Drifting away means floating or moving away from a place. The kelp strand keeps the otter from moving away while it sleeps.**
3	In paragraph 2, what does persistent mean? What nearby words give the clue?	**Persistent means continuing to try. The clue is "trying again and again."**
4	What does ecosystem mean in paragraph 3?	**An ecosystem is a community of living things and their surroundings.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A squirrel is _nimble_, [moving quickly and easily] from branch to branch. It can leap over gaps and land on thin twigs.

Accept accurate meanings stated in the student's own words when they match the passage clues. For Part 3, accept any two-sentence animal description with an underlined challenging word and circled context clues that clearly show its meaning.