Fire Words at Work

Use context to build academic and science vocabulary.

9.RV.1.A "Develop and accurately use general academic and content-specific vocabulary through reading, discussing, and writing about grade-level texts and topics."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three content-specific terms whose meanings are explained or shown by nearby details, and circle three general academic words that help explain decisions or effects. This helps you notice how writers use precise vocabulary to explain a topic.

Why Forests Need Planned Fire

1 On a cool spring morning, a crew in a longleaf pine forest may set a carefully planned fire. This practice, called a prescribed burn, is not the same as an uncontrolled wildfire. Before lighting it, specialists assess wind, humidity, and the amount of dry leaves and branches on the ground. That material is called fuel. By reducing the fuel load, the crew can mitigate, or lessen, the chance that a later wildfire will burn with extreme intensity. Firefighters remain nearby and use firebreaks, strips of cleared land, to contain the flames.

2 Many plants and animals in longleaf pine ecosystems are adapted to periodic, low-intensity fires. The heat clears thick leaf litter and opens sunny spaces where wildflowers can grow. Some pine seedlings benefit because competing shrubs are reduced. The burn may look destructive at first, yet its effects can be regenerative. For example, new grasses often appear soon after a burn, providing food for insects and cover for small animals. Researchers monitor these changes over time. Their observations help land managers evaluate whether a burn met its ecological goals without harming nearby communities.

3 The decision to use prescribed fire involves trade-offs. Smoke can affect air quality, so crews choose days with weather conditions that will carry smoke away from homes and roads. They notify neighbors, obtain permits, and establish clear safety criteria before the burn begins. In some places, officials postpone a burn when drought, strong winds, or poor smoke ventilation could create unacceptable risks. Although planning requires time and public communication, managers argue that regular, controlled burns can make forests more resilient and reduce the severity of future wildfires.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what does mitigate mean, and what action is said to mitigate a later wildfire?

2. Use details from paragraph 1 to explain what fuel load means.

3. In paragraph 2, does regenerative mean damaging or renewing? Give two details that support your answer.

4. What does safety criteria mean in paragraph 3? Use the examples in the paragraph to explain.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence recommendation about whether a park should plan a prescribed burn. Use at least two general academic words from the passage and two content-specific terms, and make each term clear through context.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 9 · 9.RV.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three content-specific terms whose meanings are explained or shown by nearby details, and circle three general academic words that help explain decisions or effects. This helps you notice how writers use precise vocabulary to explain a topic. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does mitigate mean, and what action is said to mitigate a later wildfire?	**Mitigate means lessen. Reducing the fuel load can lessen the chance of an extremely intense later wildfire.**
2	Use details from paragraph 1 to explain what fuel load means.	**Fuel load means the amount of burnable material, such as dry leaves and branches, on the ground.**
3	In paragraph 2, does regenerative mean damaging or renewing? Give two details that support your answer.	**Regenerative means renewing. New grasses appear after a burn, and those grasses provide food for insects and cover for small animals.**
4	What does safety criteria mean in paragraph 3? Use the examples in the paragraph to explain.	**Safety criteria are standards or conditions used to decide whether a burn can happen safely, such as avoiding drought, strong winds, and poor smoke ventilation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The park should assess the fuel load, the dry plant material that could feed a fire, before choosing a burn date. Its safety criteria should include light winds and good smoke ventilation so smoke can move away from roads. A prescribed burn can mitigate the risk of a more intense wildfire by reducing the available fuel.

Accept accurate vocabulary explanations supported by nearby passage details. For the open response, accept varied recommendations when they contain three sentences, at least two general academic words, at least two content-specific terms, and clear contextual explanations.