Ferry's Hidden Meanings

Use clues to separate literal details from figurative language.

9.RV.1.B "Use context and sentence structure to clarify the literal and figurative meanings of words and phrases."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three phrases that are figurative rather than literal. Circle the nearby words or clauses that help you infer each phrase's meaning, then number each phrase and its clue 1, 2, and 3.

The Morning Star

1. At dawn, crews at Harborview's small boatyard prepared to move an old wooden ferry onto dry land. The vessel had carried commuters across the bay for fifty years, but salt water had weakened its boards. As the crane lifted it, the crowd held its breath. No one stopped breathing, of course, yet the dock became silent while workers watched the straps. When the ferry cleared the water, sunlight flashed from its wet hull, and applause broke across the pier like a wave. The retired ferry seemed to rise slowly, though the crane's powerful motor did the work.

2. Inside the workshop, conservator Lena Ortiz inspected the ferry's cabin. She called the damage a map of the boat's life: scratched benches showed where thousands of passengers had sat, and rusty bolts marked years of rain. In one corner, a narrow crack ran along a window frame. Ortiz said time had chewed at the wood because years of weather and use had slowly worn it away. Her team would replace only the pieces that could not be saved. Keeping other worn parts, she explained, would preserve evidence of the ferry's working past.

3. By afternoon, students from a nearby school visited the yard. Their guide pointed to the ferry's name, Morning Star, painted near the bow. Although the letters were faded, the name still shone in another sense, because former riders shared stories of arriving at jobs, classes, and family visits. A student asked whether the ferry would sail again. The guide replied that its traveling days were over, but its story was not. After restoration, the ferry would become a museum exhibit, inviting visitors to step into the region's maritime history.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Is the phrase "the crowd held its breath" literal or figurative? What sentence detail helps you decide?

2. What does the phrase "applause broke across the pier like a wave" suggest? Use the comparison in the sentence to explain.

3. What does Ortiz mean when she says that "time had chewed at the wood"? Which words provide the context clue?

4. What does it mean that the Morning Star's name "still shone in another sense"? Cite two details that clarify the phrase.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences about a real object or place. Use one figurative phrase in the first sentence, then use context in the second sentence to make its meaning clear without using the words "means" or "meaning." Underline your figurative phrase.

ANSWER KEY

Ferry's Hidden Meanings

GRADE 9 · 9.RV.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three phrases that are figurative rather than literal. Circle the nearby words or clauses that help you infer each phrase's meaning, then number each phrase and its clue 1, 2, and 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Is the phrase "the crowd held its breath" literal or figurative? What sentence detail helps you decide?	**It is figurative. The next sentence says that no one stopped breathing, but the dock became silent.**
2	What does the phrase "applause broke across the pier like a wave" suggest? Use the comparison in the sentence to explain.	**It suggests that applause spread suddenly across the pier. The comparison to a wave shows the sound moving outward.**
3	What does Ortiz mean when she says that "time had chewed at the wood"? Which words provide the context clue?	**Years of weather and use had slowly worn down the wood. The clue is "years of weather and use had slowly worn it away."**
4	What does it mean that the Morning Star's name "still shone in another sense"? Cite two details that clarify the phrase.	**The ferry remained important and memorable even though its painted letters were faded. Former riders shared stories, and the ferry would become a museum exhibit.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The abandoned stadium __slept__ beneath a blanket of snow. Its empty seats, locked gates, and silent scoreboard showed that no games had brought crowds there for months.

Accept any three accurately marked figurative phrases with nearby context clues, including phrases other than those addressed in the questions. Accept reasonable paraphrases when students use passage details to support their interpretations.