Words Beneath Walls

Track literal details and the ideas words suggest.

9.RV.1.D "Discriminate between the connotative and denotative meanings and interpret the connotation(s)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two details that name physical things or actions, and underline three words or phrases that suggest a feeling, attitude, or image. Beside each underlined phrase, write a brief note about what it suggests.

The Rialto Notebook

1 On Saturday morning, Maya unlocked the side door of the Rialto Theater with her grandfather. Dust floated through the lobby, and the torn velvet curtains hung like tired flags. The theater had been closed for twenty years, but its marble stairs still curved toward the balcony. Maya carried a notebook for the neighborhood history project. Her grandfather moved slowly, tapping each step with his cane. When a pigeon burst from the rafters, Maya laughed, then stopped. The dark auditorium seemed to hold its breath while they listened to the wings fade.

2 The crew chief studied the ceiling with a flashlight and called the leak stubborn. She sketched a bold plan on a sheet of plywood: repair the roof, clean the seats, and reopen the stage for local performances. Maya noticed that the workers spoke softly when they entered the dressing rooms. Names of actors were penciled inside several doors, beside dates from long-ago shows. Her grandfather ran his fingers near one name without touching it. "That singer filled every seat," he said. Outside, a delivery truck rattled past, but inside, the crew measured, photographed, and made careful lists.

3 At the next neighborhood meeting, people offered different pictures of the future. A baker said the theater deserved a rescue, not another layer of boarded windows. A shop owner worried that new investors would make the block a polished postcard. Maya wrote both comments in her notebook. She also recorded practical questions about permits, costs, and wheelchair access. Before leaving, her grandfather looked back at the theater's faded sign. "It has been quiet," he said, "but it is not finished." Maya imagined the marquee glowing over a crowd that belonged there.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what is the denotative meaning of "hold its breath"? What does the phrase suggest about the auditorium in this scene?

2. A leak cannot actually be "stubborn." What does stubborn mean when the crew chief uses it for the leak, and what connotation does the word add?

3. What connotation does bold add to the crew chief's plan? Use one detail from the plan to support your interpretation.

4. Compare the baker's word rescue with the shop owner's phrase polished postcard. What attitude toward renovation does each expression suggest?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write exactly two sentences about a real or imagined community place. In the first sentence, use one connotative word or phrase. In the second sentence, state its denotative meaning and explain the feeling or idea it adds.

ANSWER KEY

Words Beneath Walls

GRADE 9 · 9.RV.1.D

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two details that name physical things or actions, and underline three words or phrases that suggest a feeling, attitude, or image. Beside each underlined phrase, write a brief note about what it suggests. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what is the denotative meaning of "hold its breath"? What does the phrase suggest about the auditorium in this scene?	**Denotatively, to hold one's breath is to stop breathing for a short time. In context, the phrase suggests that the auditorium is very still, tense, or expectant.**
2	A leak cannot actually be "stubborn." What does stubborn mean when the crew chief uses it for the leak, and what connotation does the word add?	**It means the leak has been difficult to stop or repair. Stubborn adds a frustrated sense that the problem resists the crew's efforts.**
3	What connotation does bold add to the crew chief's plan? Use one detail from the plan to support your interpretation.	**Bold suggests daring, confident, or ambitious. The plan includes repairing the roof, cleaning the seats, and reopening the stage for performances.**
4	Compare the baker's word rescue with the shop owner's phrase polished postcard. What attitude toward renovation does each expression suggest?	**Rescue suggests saving and valuing the theater or neighborhood. Polished postcard suggests concern that the area could become overly perfected or made mainly for appearances.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The old library stood like a patient guardian beside the playground. A guardian literally protects someone, and the comparison makes the library seem safe and watchful.

Accept reasonable interpretations when students distinguish a word's literal meaning from the feeling, attitude, or image it suggests. For the open task, check that the response has exactly two sentences and explains both denotation and connotation.