Use Context Clues

Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Read the text. Circle what the word means.

READ THIS FIRST

Plants Above the Tree Line

High on a mountain, there is a line where trees stop growing. Above this tree line, the land is harsh. Winters are long, winds are fierce, and snow can fall even in July. The soil is thin and rocky. Yet hundreds of kinds of plants live there. They have special features that help them conserve, or save, their warmth and water.

Most alpine plants are tiny. Many grow no taller than a coffee mug. Staying close to the ground keeps them out of the strongest wind. Some, like moss campion, grow in a tight, round cushion. Inside the cushion, the air can be several degrees warmer than the air outside.

Many alpine plants are also covered with fuzz. These soft, tiny hairs trap a thin layer of warm air. The hairs also protect the leaves from the strong sunlight found high on a mountain.

Roots matter too. The wind and frost can shift the rocky soil. To stay in place, many alpine plants have long, strong roots. Some roots reach much deeper than the plant is tall. They anchor the plant, holding it firmly in the ground the way a rope holds a boat.

In a valley meadow, plants grow close together. In contrast, alpine plants are sparse. They grow far apart, with bare rock and gravel between them. Each plant needs its own space to collect enough water and sunlight.

The growing season above the tree line is brief. Summer may last only six to eight weeks. Alpine plants must sprout, bloom, and make seeds before the cold returns. For the rest of the year, they are dormant. They rest under the snow and do not grow at all. Then, when the snow melts, they wake up and bloom again.

Scientists say these plants have adapted to life on the mountain. Over a very long time, they changed in ways that help them survive the cold and wind. A rocky mountaintop may look empty, but it is full of tough little survivors.

1. What does conserve mean in this text?
   gather from the soil
   keep from being lost or wasted
   give away to other plants
   lose very quickly

2. The winds are fierce. What does fierce mean?
   gentle very strong quiet warm

3. What does anchor mean in the fourth paragraph?
   pull out of the ground hold firmly in place carry water up help grow taller

4. Alpine plants are sparse. What does sparse mean?
   crowded together spread far apart full of flowers very tall

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Answer Key - Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

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