Use Context Clues

Grade 4 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

Name _____ Date _____

Read the text. Circle what the word means.

READ THIS FIRST

Roads Made of Ice

In parts of northern Canada, some towns have no roads that connect them to the rest of the country. These remote communities sit far from cities, surrounded by forests, lakes, and swamps. For most of the year, the only way to reach them is by small airplane. Flying in food, fuel, and building supplies is very expensive.

Every winter, however, something remarkable happens. When temperatures drop far below freezing, the lakes and rivers freeze solid. Workers then build ice roads across them. For a few weeks, trucks can drive where there is usually only water.

Building an ice road takes careful work. First, crews measure how thick the ice is. They use radar machines that send signals down through the ice. Thin ice is treacherous. A heavy truck could break through and sink. Crews only open a road when the ice can hold the weight safely. For the biggest trucks, the ice may need to be more than three feet thick.

To make the ice grow faster, crews clear away the snow. This may seem strange, but snow acts like a blanket. It keeps the cold air from reaching the water underneath. With the snow plowed off, the ice thickens more quickly.

Ice roads are temporary. They usually last only six to ten weeks. As spring arrives, the sun warms the ice, and it begins to thaw. Once the ice starts to melt, the roads close. Then the towns are cut off again until the next winter.

Because the season is so short, every day counts. Trucks travel day and night, carrying a whole year of supplies. They bring fuel to heat homes, lumber to build schools, and machines too large for airplanes. For these communities, the ice roads are vital. Without them, life would be much harder and costlier.

Drivers must follow strict rules. They drive slowly, often under fifteen miles per hour. Driving fast creates waves under the ice that can crack it. Trucks also keep far apart so that the weight is spread out. Workers monitor the roads constantly, checking the ice every day for new cracks.

Today, warmer winters are making the season shorter in some places. The ice forms later and melts sooner. Some communities are asking for permanent roads built on land. These roads would stay open all year. However, building them through swamps and forests is slow and costly. For now, many towns still wait for winter, when the lakes turn into highways.

1. Thin ice is treacherous. What does treacherous mean?

   easy to see through dangerous very old slippery

2. Ice roads are temporary. What does temporary mean?

   very dangerous lasting only a short time lasting all year built on land

3. As spring arrives, the ice begins to thaw. What does thaw mean?

   crack apart melt turn dark freeze harder

4. What does vital mean in the sixth paragraph?

   heavy and large strange and new slow and costly

   very important and needed

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Answer Key - Grade 4 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

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