

Multiple Meaning Words

Many standardized tests assess knowledge of words with multiple meanings in the vocabulary section. We know that multiple meaning words pose unique problems to students, and we try to call attention to them when we come across them in discussions, on assignments, and in our reading. The words themselves are rarely difficult—kids even enjoy exploring different meanings—but on standardized tests students often seem to lose what they know about multiple meaning words because of the unfamiliar format of the questions.

To prepare kids, concentrate awhile on the language of the directions and format, and model the strategies that allow students to show their knowledge of multiple meaning words. The following section presents some sample teacher think-alouds that help students to confidently address multiple meaning word questions.

Introductory Lesson

You might say to students, “We know that some words have more than one meaning. Let’s name some of them.”

Write words on chalkboard or chart paper as students suggest them. After each word, ask for volunteers to give different meanings. After discussing several words, tell students they will probably encounter multiple meaning words on their standardized test in the spring, and that you are going to practice some test questions so they won’t get tripped up by unusual directions.

[Put the following example on a transparency so you can show what to do with your pencil—crossing out choices.]

Directions: Choose the word whose meanings fit both sentences.

I asked him not to _____ the glass.

It looks like there is only one _____ left.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| A. drink | C. drop |
| B. cup | D. break |

Think-Aloud

“Okay, it says to choose the word whose meanings fit both sentences. There’s that word—*both*—which alerts me to make sure my choice works in both sentences. I know that two or three of the possible answers will work fine in *one* of the sentences, but only one word will fit *both* sentences. I’m going to cover the second sentence with the pencil.



Independent Practice 1

Multiple Meaning Words

Directions: Choose the word whose meanings fit both sentences.

- I wish you wouldn't _____ your voice.
How much money did we _____ for our new club?
A. lower
B. raise
C. spend
D. collect
- We can use this _____ to measure that table.
A new _____ was elected by the people to govern their country.
E. yardstick
F. king
G. ruler
H. president
- He hurt his _____ when he ran into the door.
Try to put this thread through the _____ of that needle.
A. knee
B. opening
C. eye
D. tip
- A statement should be followed by a _____.
The class _____ seemed to pass slowly.
E. question mark
F. decade
G. period
H. time
- What a difficult _____ she had with today's math test.
At what _____ will you be home?
A. point
B. time
C. period
D. decision
- Gasoline, oil, and diesel fuel are all _____ from petroleum.
Mrs. Dupont came from an old and _____ family.
E. wealthy
F. made
G. refined
H. established
- We had to _____ the dense undergrowth to reach the old camp.
The old blacksmith still fashioned horseshoes on his _____.
A. force
B. go
C. stove
D. forge
- You should always _____ an agreement with a handshake.
Be sure you _____ the plastic storage bag, so it won't leak.
E. seal
F. clamp
G. use
H. fill