Fiction and Vocabulary Exit Tickets

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

Grade 6 ELA. Adapt the reading and response demands to your students and curriculum.

Estimated preparation: 8 minutes to review the eight target words and keys, select a ticket and prepare copies.

Estimated teaching: 32 minutes total if all eight tickets are used. Plan about four minutes per ticket and adjust to your class.

Teacher directions

Use any ticket on its own after related instruction, or use the set over several lessons; each learner page stands alone.

Plan about four minutes per ticket and adjust to your class. Read aloud or use text-to-speech when that is an established access route.

Learners explain the target word’s meaning, supply all clues or details requested by that ticket, and explain how those clues support the meaning. Accept clear paraphrases and established oral, dictated, or communication methods when handwriting is not the focus. Allow extra paper when needed.

For a submitted scorable response, score each criterion independently as 0 or 1; total 0–3. Award one point for a context-fitting meaning, one for all requested accurate clues, and one for an accurate explanation connecting the requested clues to the meaning. Partial credit means earning some of these three points, not fractional points. Use the full descriptors below; one relevant clue does not fulfill a request for two.

One response is evidence about one word in one excerpt at that moment; it does not establish vocabulary mastery, reading level, broad comprehension, or readiness. Use another item or a brief conversation before making a broader instructional judgment, and note any support or response route used.

If a learner names a plausible meaning without a clue, ask which detail supports it. If a clue is named without a link, ask how it points to the meaning. Do not penalize a supported paraphrase or response method.

A missing or uncaptured response is not enough evidence yet: check access and offer another opportunity. Do not infer a skill score from absence alone. A submitted response may earn 0–3 under the rubric. Clear combined wording can satisfy more than one criterion; separate sentences and quotations are not required.

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Three-point scoring guide

Meaning — 1 point: gives or clearly conveys a meaning that fits the target word in this excerpt. Accept a clear paraphrase; a dictionary definition is not required.

0 points: the submitted response gives no discernible meaning, an unrelated meaning, or a meaning contradicted by the context.

Clues — 1 point: accurately identifies all clue types and the number of details requested by the ticket. A short quotation or accurate paraphrase is acceptable.

0 points: at least one requested clue is missing, inaccurate or irrelevant. For example, a two-action question needs two distinct actions; the amounts question needs both beginning and ending amounts.

Connection — 1 point: accurately explains how the requested clues together support a meaning that fits the excerpt. The relationship may be clear in a concise combined sentence.

0 points: the connection is absent, explains only part of the requested evidence, or conflicts with the context. Listing clues alone is not an explanation.

Source and rights: all eight excerpts are original fictional instructional texts written for Fiction and Vocabulary Exit Tickets. They use no external passage, image, or factual claim.

Support and extension

Support

Task context: What does reluctant mean in this excerpt? Name two actions that helped you infer the meaning, and explain how they support it.

For learners who benefit from reduced reading load, reveal one sentence at a time, reread the excerpt aloud or use available text-to-speech, and let learners mark the target word and a possible clue. Allow dictation or an established communication method. Do not remove the contextual clues or supply the target definition before the response.

Extension

Task context: What does tranquil describe about the garden? Use two details from the excerpt and explain how they create that meaning.

Invite learners to write a new sentence that uses the target word with the same meaning, then identify the new clue that would help a reader infer it. Treat this as a separate practice opportunity, not part of the exit-ticket score.

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

Ticket 1 of 8 · teacher key · The Cardboard Step

Target word: reluctant

Focus: Infer a feeling/stance word from a character’s behavior. Clue pattern: actions and hesitation.

Original fictional excerpt

When the makers’ club needed someone to test its new cardboard step, Nia volunteered to build it but paused when the group asked her to climb on. She pressed one corner with a finger. “What if it folds?” she asked, keeping both shoes on the floor. The others offered to brace the sides. Nia watched them add two strips of tape, then set one foot on the edge. After it held, she climbed up and grinned. At first, she had been reluctant to try the step.

Task

What does reluctant mean in this excerpt? Name two actions that helped you infer the meaning, and explain how they support it.

Strong response

Reluctant means hesitant or not eager to try something. Nia stays on the floor, tests the step with one finger, and asks whether it will fold before she tries it. Those actions show that she is not ready to climb on at first.

Why it fits: The sequence moves from hesitation to trying the step after the group adds support. The change in her actions shows the local meaning without requiring the learner to claim she was afraid.

Also accept: Reluctant means hesitant: Nia stays on the floor and checks the corner with a finger before climbing, showing she is not ready to try it yet.

Also accept: She is not eager to try it: pausing and testing a corner first show that she hesitates before trusting the step.

Interpretation note: Accept hesitant, unsure, or not willing yet. Do not require “afraid”; that is a possible guess but the excerpt supports hesitation more directly. Full credit also requires all requested clues and a clear explanation of their connection; supported meanings with incomplete evidence can earn only the criteria actually met.

Ticket 2 of 8 · teacher key · A Stand for the Map

Target word: makeshift

Focus: Infer that an object is an improvised, temporary substitute from how it is assembled and used. Clue pattern: circumstance and use.

Original fictional excerpt

Rain began as Elias and Ruth carried their map board to the courtyard. Their wooden stand had been left in the library. Elias turned an empty crate upside down, rested the board on it, and wedged a rolled sweater underneath so it would not slide. The arrangement looked uneven, but it held until their presentation ended. “This makeshift stand will do for now,” Ruth said. When class was over, they carried the board and sweater inside and returned the crate.

Task

What does makeshift tell you about the stand in this excerpt? Use a detail about how it was made and a detail about how long it was used to explain your meaning.

Strong response

Makeshift means an improvised, temporary substitute made from available things. Elias uses a crate and a rolled sweater instead of the proper wooden stand, and the group uses it only until the presentation ends.

Why it fits: The missing stand explains why the characters assemble a substitute from nearby materials. The time limit (“until their presentation ended”) supports the temporary part of the meaning.

Also accept: Makeshift means a temporary replacement made with available things: they use a crate and sweater for support only until the presentation ends.

Also accept: It is an improvised stand: the crate and rolled sweater replace the forgotten wooden stand, and they take it apart after the presentation, so it serves just that short need.

Interpretation note: Accept “quickly assembled replacement” or “temporary stand.” Do not require the substitute to be broken or useless; it works for the presentation. Full credit also requires all requested clues and a clear explanation of their connection; supported meanings with incomplete evidence can earn only the criteria actually met.

Ticket 3 of 8 · teacher key · The Bookmark Table

Target word: dwindled

Focus: Use a numerical before/after change to infer a word meaning. Clue pattern: before-and-after quantities.

Original fictional excerpt

At the book fair, Omar set a stack of twenty-four handmade bookmarks beside the sign-up sheet. During the morning, visitors chose one after finishing a book. By lunch, the stack had dwindled to nine. Omar counted them again, then put a small note on the table: “Only nine left—please take one.” He was surprised that the bookmarks had gone so quickly, but he saved the last few for the afternoon readers.

Task

What does dwindled mean here? Use the beginning and ending amounts, then explain what changed.

Strong response

Dwindled means gradually became fewer or smaller. The stack goes from twenty-four bookmarks to nine as visitors take them, so the number left decreases over time.

Why it fits: The two counts give a direct before-and-after clue. The word describes the shrinking number in the stack, not the bookmarks getting physically smaller.

Also accept: Dwindled means became fewer: the count falls from twenty-four bookmarks to nine as visitors take them, showing the stack shrinks in number.

Also accept: The amount decreases over the morning, from twenty-four to nine; fewer bookmarks remain, rather than each bookmark becoming smaller.

Interpretation note: Accept “decreased” or “became fewer.” Do not accept “disappeared” as the full meaning because nine bookmarks remain. Full credit also requires all requested clues and a clear explanation of their connection; supported meanings with incomplete evidence can earn only the criteria actually met.

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

Ticket 4 of 8 · teacher key · The Yellow Umbrella

Target word: conspicuous

Focus: Use a visual contrast and others’ reactions to infer a word meaning. Clue pattern: contrast and comparison.

Original fictional excerpt

At the crowded bus stop, nearly every umbrella was navy, gray, or black. Priya’s bright yellow umbrella stood above the others like a small patch of sunlight. When her brother arrived, he spotted it from the far end of the sidewalk and walked straight toward her. “Your umbrella is easy to find,” he said. Priya laughed and folded it beside the bench. Against the row of dark umbrellas, hers looked conspicuous.

Task

What does conspicuous mean about Priya’s umbrella? Explain how the comparison and her brother’s reaction help you infer it.

Strong response

Conspicuous means easy to notice or standing out. The yellow umbrella contrasts with the dark ones, and Priya’s brother spots it from far away.

Why it fits: The contrast in color and the quick recognition from a distance both show that the umbrella attracts attention. The context supports visibility, not a judgment that the umbrella is good or bad.

Also accept: Conspicuous means noticeable: yellow stands out among the dark umbrellas, and her brother spots it from far away because it is easy to see.

Also accept: The umbrella is easy to notice: its bright color contrasts with navy, gray and black, helping her brother find it from the end of the sidewalk.

Interpretation note: Accept “noticeable” or “stands out.” A response that only says “yellow” needs a link to why that makes it easy to notice. Full credit also requires all requested clues and a clear explanation of their connection; supported meanings with incomplete evidence can earn only the criteria actually met.

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

Ticket 5 of 8 · teacher key · The Club Robot

Target word: erratic

Focus: Infer a pattern word from several inconsistent actions. Clue pattern: sequence of changing actions.

Original fictional excerpt

The coding club placed its small robot at the start line. It was supposed to roll toward a paper flag. Instead, it moved left, paused, spun in a circle, and then rolled backward. Jo changed one setting, but the next test followed a different route: the robot raced forward, stopped beside the wall, and turned away from the flag. “Its path is erratic,” Jo said, writing down every movement so the club could find the problem.

Task

What does erratic tell you about the robot’s path? Use at least two movements from the excerpt and explain the pattern they show.

Strong response

Erratic means irregular or not following a steady, predictable pattern. The robot turns, spins, reverses, and then follows a different route on the next test.

Why it fits: Several changes in direction and speed show inconsistency. A single unusual turn would be weaker evidence; the changing sequence supports the meaning of erratic.

Also accept: Erratic means irregular: the robot spins and then rolls backward, changing direction instead of following a steady route toward the flag.

Also accept: Its path is unpredictable: it moves left and spins on one test, then races forward and turns away on another, so there is no steady route.

Interpretation note: Accept irregular, unpredictable, or changing without a steady pattern. Do not require the learner to say the robot is broken; the text only says the club is looking for a problem. Full credit also requires all requested clues and a clear explanation of their connection; supported meanings with incomplete evidence can earn only the criteria actually met.

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

Ticket 6 of 8 · teacher key · The Paper Stars

Target word: meticulous

Focus: Infer a care/attention word from repeated detail-focused actions. Clue pattern: specific actions and precision.

Original fictional excerpt

For the hallway display, Jae folded paper stars while the rest of the group cut out large circles. Jae lined up each corner before pressing the crease, smoothed every fold with a ruler, and checked that the two points matched. When one star tilted, Jae unfolded it and measured the edges again. The work took longer, but each star looked even. “You are meticulous,” the art teacher said as Jae placed the finished row on the board.

Task

What does meticulous suggest about how Jae works? Use two actions as clues and explain how they point to that meaning.

Strong response

Meticulous means very careful and attentive to small details. Jae lines up corners, smooths each fold, checks matching points, and measures again when one star tilts.

Why it fits: The repeated checking and precise adjustments show close attention to detail. The slower pace is a result in this scene, but “slow” alone is not the meaning of meticulous.

Also accept: Meticulous means careful about details: Jae lines up the corners and measures the edges again to make sure the star is even.

Also accept: Jae works precisely: checking matching points and smoothing every fold show attention to small details, not just working slowly.

Interpretation note: Accept careful, precise, or detail-focused. Do not score “slow” by itself as a full meaning; it needs the care/detail connection. Full credit also requires all requested clues and a clear explanation of their connection; supported meanings with incomplete evidence can earn only the criteria actually met.

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

Ticket 7 of 8 · teacher key · Blue Fabric for the Banner

Target word: scarce

Focus: Use amount and characters’ decisions to infer a word about supply. Clue pattern: limited supply and response.

Original fictional excerpt

The drama club wanted blue fabric for a banner. When they opened the supply box, they found four short pieces—too little for the wide banner they had planned. The group measured carefully and saved every scrap for the letters. “Blue fabric is scarce today,” Malik said, choosing a narrow strip for the title. The club used paper for the background instead, so the banner could still be finished before the family night.

Task

What does scarce mean in this situation? Use the amount of fabric and the group’s choices to explain your meaning.

Strong response

Scarce means limited or not available in much quantity. The group has only four short pieces, not enough for its wide banner, so it measures carefully and uses paper for the background.

Why it fits: The small supply compared with the planned need, and the choice to conserve it, show that the material is limited. Scarce does not necessarily mean there is none.

Also accept: Scarce means in short supply: four short pieces cannot cover the wide banner, so they save scraps for letters and use paper for the background.

Also accept: There is little blue fabric available: only four short pieces make them measure carefully and choose a narrow title strip to stretch the limited supply.

Interpretation note: Accept limited, in short supply, or not enough for the intended use. Do not require “none”; some fabric is present. Full credit also requires all requested clues and a clear explanation of their connection; supported meanings with incomplete evidence can earn only the criteria actually met.

Ticket 8 of 8 · teacher key · After the Field Games

Target word: tranquil

Focus: Infer a mood/setting word from several calm details and a contrast. Clue pattern: setting details and contrast.

Original fictional excerpt

After the noisy field games, Amira walked to the school garden with her sketchbook. The small pond barely moved; a few rings spread where a leaf touched the water. Reeds made a soft rustle, and two birds called from the fence. No one was racing or shouting there. Amira sat on a flat stone and began to draw. The garden felt tranquil after the busy field, and she stayed until the last page was full.

Task

What does tranquil describe about the garden? Use two details from the excerpt and explain how they create that meaning.

Strong response

Tranquil means calm and peaceful. The pond is almost still, the reeds rustle softly, and there is no racing or shouting, unlike the busy field.

Why it fits: The quiet movements and contrast with the noisy field support a peaceful mood. The excerpt is not completely silent: the birds call and reeds rustle.

Also accept: Tranquil means peaceful: the nearly still pond and softly rustling reeds create a calm setting instead of a busy, noisy one.

Also accept: The garden feels calm: there is no racing or shouting, and the pond barely moves, making it much quieter and less active than the field.

Interpretation note: Accept calm, peaceful, or quiet in mood. Do not require literal silence because the text includes birds and rustling reeds. Full credit also requires all requested clues and a clear explanation of their connection; supported meanings with incomplete evidence can earn only the criteria actually met.

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

Fictional teaching response — sound for the named task

Named task: Ticket 1: The Cardboard Step — reluctant

Fictional response — sound for the named task: “Reluctant means hesitant or not ready to try it at first. Nia paused when asked to climb and kept both shoes on the floor while asking whether it might fold. Those actions show she held back from trying the step before the added tape and the successful one-foot test.”

Visible evidence: A context-fitting meaning and two actions connected to hesitation.

Not established: A permanent trait or general reading/vocabulary mastery.

Clarify: Accept a different accurate pair of actions with an explanation; the question does not require an alternative dictionary sense.

Next teaching/evidence: Use the different Ticket 2 only after checking its own word/clues with its matching key; it samples another word, not an equivalent test of reluctant. For fuller same-target practice, use the linked context-vocabulary lesson and its separate current fresh/later checks.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Ticket 2 only

Use Context to Clarify Vocabulary — matching teacher directions and answers

Fictional teaching response — partially developed

Named task: Ticket 1: The Cardboard Step — reluctant

Fictional response — partially developed: “Reluctant means hesitant.”

Visible evidence: A suitable meaning for this context.

Not established: The two requested action clues or how they support the meaning.

Clarify: Ask Nia’s first two actions before she climbs and how they show holding back.

Next teaching/evidence: Use the context-vocabulary lesson’s guided reluctant excerpt about Devin. Explain the distinction between visible hesitation and a guessed cause, then ask the learner to identify two actions and their link. Do not preview an unseen ticket’s definition.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Model and guided practice

Reserve: Ticket 2 only

Use Context to Clarify Vocabulary — matching teacher directions and answers

Fictional teaching response — plausible error

Named task: Ticket 1: The Cardboard Step — reluctant

Fictional response — plausible error: “Reluctant means excited, because Nia grinned at the end.”

Visible evidence: An accurate later event in the story.

Not established: The target word’s ‘at first’ meaning; the response uses a later change to explain the earlier hesitation.

Clarify: Point to ‘At first’ and separate the initial paused/floor actions from the later grin.

Next teaching/evidence: Use the guided reluctant excerpt in the context-vocabulary lesson, matching the word to the actions at that point in the scene. Then return to the ticket’s initial actions; reserve different ticket/context checks until after practice.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Model and guided practice

Reserve: Ticket 2 only

Use Context to Clarify Vocabulary — matching teacher directions and answers