TEACHER COPY · READ FIRST

Upstream Vocabulary on paper · Grade 8

4 printable trips that match the 4 levels of the online game. No device or account needed.

What is inside

Pages	For	What
This page	Teacher	How to run, score and choose a next step
Trips 1–4	Students	Each trip: the level's picture and stop names, 4 word stops, a two-part challenge (stop 5) and an unscored Talk bonus
Answer key	Teacher	Answer, why it fits, and what each wrong letter usually means
Record sheet	Teacher	First answers and fixes, one row per student per trip

Run one trip (15–25 minutes)

1. Copy one trip for each student. Keep the answer key back.
2. Students read each passage and circle an answer. On the online game a miss gives a clue and a second try; on paper, check the stop, say *"Reread for the clue,"* and let the student try once more. They keep the first answer and write the new letter with a star (★).
3. If the second try misses too, read the key's "why" line together. That is what the game does after a second miss.
4. When all five stops are done, students may read and answer the Talk bonus. It is not scored.

Count and choose a next step

Count **first answers** on stops 1–4, and record stop 5 Part A and Part B separately. Fixes with a star go in their own column. There is no cut score: use the pattern to decide what to talk about next.

What you see	A next step
Missed, then fixed after rereading (★)	Ask "Which detail helped?" The clue strategy is working; give another trip.
Missed twice	Read the key's "why" line together; replace the word in the sentence and check it makes sense. Revisit that skill.
Part A right, Part B wrong	The meaning is there; practice pointing to the exact words that prove it.
Part A wrong, Part B right	The student found the clue but did not use it; ask them to say the meaning in their own words.
The same skill missed on several trips	Small-group practice on that skill (the key names the skill for each stop).

Levels in this packet

- **River trip 1: Shell Creek** — Gravel Bend, Riffle Run, Pine Pool, Boulder Pocket, Headwaters Challenge
- **River trip 2: Miracle Mile** — Sagebrush Bank, Long Glide, Deep Run, Gravel Seam, Far Bend
- **River trip 3: Encampment River** — Canyon Pool, Amber Shallows, Boulder Run, Pine Shade, Riffle Head
- **River trip 4: North Tongue River** — Meadow Bend, Willow Run, Grassy Cut, Shallow Riffle, Rapid Tail

Same words as the online game. These are the game's approved passages and questions, so a student who played online may have seen some. Every word also has a second passage that is **not** used in this packet; it is kept back for an unseen recheck. Original practice from Pole Mountain Learning, informed by published ELA expectations. It is not an official Pearson, NAVVY or WY-TOPP assessment and does not use their test questions. Results are practice notes, not grades, and do not predict test scores or establish mastery. Built and reviewed with AI tools; no human classroom trial of this revision yet. Free for classroom use. November 2026 edition.

TEACHER ANSWER KEY · KEEP SEPARATE FROM STUDENT COPIES

Answer key · Grade 8

River trip 1: Shell Creek

Stop	Word · skill	Key	Why it fits	If they chose…
1	corroborate context clues · RI.8.4, L.8.4a	**A**	The detail “The photograph independently showed the same line of water against the doorway.” supports “strengthen a claim with more evidence”.	**B:** An interesting story can still lack evidence that supports it. **C:** The new evidence supports the account rather than substituting a different account. **D:** Questioning reliability would weaken the account; the passage describes support.
2	antithesis word parts · RI.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.4b	**C**	The detail “One method invited questions and revision, while the other demanded silent acceptance of a fixed answer.” supports “the direct opposite of an idea or approach”.	**A:** The term identifies opposition, not a reason supporting the first approach. **B:** The passage contrasts opposing positions rather than blending them. **D:** A small change would preserve the basic approach, while the passage sets the approaches against each other.
3	pragmatic shades of meaning · RI.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.5c	**A**	The detail “They chose a smaller repair they could finish with the materials and time actually available.” supports “focused on what can work in real conditions”.	**B:** The approach is chosen for what it can accomplish, not for how impressive it sounds. **C:** A practical response still seeks improvement; it works within existing conditions. **D:** Cost is one consideration, but the passage also examines whether the solution works.
4	sanction multiple meanings · RI.8.4, L.8.4a	**A**	The detail “Once the office gave written permission, the organizers could reserve the square and announce the date.” supports “official approval or permission”.	**B:** Sanction can refer to a penalty, but the passage concerns permission to proceed. **C:** Approval permits an activity; it does not forecast attendance. **D:** The plan provides details, while the sanction supplies authorization.
5A	a double-edged sword figurative language · RL.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.5a, RL.8.1	**D**	The detail “The reminders improved punctuality but also interrupted everyone’s concentration.” supports “a benefit that also creates a drawback”.	**A:** The situation includes a real benefit as well as a difficulty, not two wholly harmful choices. **B:** The expression emphasizes an unwanted effect alongside the useful one. **C:** The passage uses an image to describe a situation, not the physical edge of an object.
5B	evidence	**A**	“The reminders improved punctuality but also interrupted everyone’s concentration.” is the detail that shows “a double-edged sword” means “a benefit that also creates a drawback.”	**B:** The detail “Priya finally persuaded her family to adopt a shared calendar for the busy summer.” **C:** The detail “She chose different colors for each person and entered the dates they had already agreed upon” belongs to the situation, but does not establish the meaning of “a double-edged sword”. **D:** The detail “Her brother showed her how to change which reminders appeared during study time.”

Talk bonus (riffle): A riffle is a shallow stretch of a stream where the water runs fast and ripples over rocks.

River trip 2: Miracle Mile

Stop	Word · skill	Key	Why it fits	If they chose…
1	ambiguous context clues · RI.8.4, L.8.4a	**B**	The detail “Some readers understood ‘with passes’ to describe only the teachers, while others thought it applied to both teachers and students.” supports “allowing more than one reasonable meaning”.	**A:** Additional detail could clarify the message; the passage does not complain that it gives too much. **C:** The problem is uncertainty about the intended meaning, not evidence of a deliberate falsehood. **D:** The people can read the words; they disagree about what the words direct them to do.
2	circumspect word parts · RL.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.4b	**D**	The detail “She compared the costs, asked what would happen if a volunteer canceled and checked whether the space was actually available.” supports “careful about risks before taking action”.	**A:** The person considers the decision carefully rather than rejecting change automatically. **B:** The roots suggest looking around, but the contextual meaning concerns considering consequences. **C:** The passage describes examining uncertainty instead of dismissing it.
3	complacent shades of meaning · RL.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.5c	**B**	The detail “He stopped inspecting the model even after two teammates mentioned that its supports were beginning to loosen.” supports “too satisfied to attend to emerging problems”.	**A:** The character overlooks advice or warning instead of using it to improve. **C:** The character stops checking despite reasons to remain attentive. **D:** The problem is excessive satisfaction, not constant anxiety.
4	temper multiple meanings · RL.8.4, L.8.4a	**B**	The detail “She kept her main objection but removed the accusation that everyone supporting the plan was selfish.” supports “make an attitude or response less extreme”.	**A:** The speaker adds qualifications instead of increasing certainty. **C:** The verb describes reducing the intensity of a response, not becoming angrier. **D:** This use concerns a reaction or judgment, not a measurement of heat.
5A	a house of cards figurative language · RL.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.5a, RL.8.1	**A**	The detail “The entire event depended on a room reservation that no one had confirmed, so one refusal would undo every planned activity.” supports “a weakly supported plan vulnerable to collapse”.	**B:** The expression concerns the plan’s weakness rather than the value of a collection. **C:** The plan may be serious; the image describes how easily it could fall apart. **D:** Complexity alone does not make a system fragile, and this plan’s supports have not been secured.
5B	evidence	**B**	“one refusal would undo every planned activity” is the detail that shows “a house of cards” means “a weakly supported plan vulnerable to collapse.”	**A:** The detail “before spending money on the printed materials.” **C:** The detail “Our adviser spread the pages across the table.” **D:** The detail “I put the sample tickets back in the folder as the meeting ended.”

Talk bonus (eddy): An eddy is a pocket of water that circles off to the side of the main current.

River trip 3: Encampment River

Stop	Word · skill	Key	Why it fits	If they chose…
1	inherent context clues · RI.8.4, L.8.4a	**C**	The detail “Even a carefully selected sample represents only part of the whole population.” supports “existing as a basic part of something”.	**A:** The characteristic remains even when the task is completed correctly. **B:** The characteristic belongs to the method or model itself; it is not merely a passing circumstance. **D:** The passage distinguishes a basic characteristic from a later addition.
2	inconclusive word parts · RI.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.4b	**A**	The detail “The two designs performed almost alike, and the small differences changed direction from one trial to the next.” supports “not sufficient to settle a question”.	**B:** Uncertain evidence does not necessarily establish the opposite conclusion. **C:** A procedure can be orderly while its results still fail to settle the question. **D:** The results remain relevant even though they do not justify a firm conclusion.
3	insinuation shades of meaning · RL.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.5c	**C**	The detail “He did not accuse me directly, but he asked why the keys always disappeared whenever I stayed late.” supports “suggesting an accusation without saying it openly”.	**A:** The wording points listeners toward an accusation rather than simply requesting information. **B:** The speaker hints at a claim without providing evidence or stating it directly. **D:** The comment implies something negative rather than openly explaining admiration.
4	novel multiple meanings · RI.8.4, L.8.4a	**C**	The detail “Instead of building a larger container, one team proposed changing the shape of the opening so items would separate as they entered.” supports “new and unlike familiar approaches”.	**A:** An unfamiliar approach can still be explained and understood. **B:** The passage presents something that has not already become an established practice. **D:** The adjective describes the approach’s originality, not whether it appears in a book.
5A	a hollow victory figurative language · RL.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.5a, RL.8.1	**B**	The detail “Winning gave her little joy; the project had cost her a friendship she valued.” supports “a win that feels empty despite the outward success”.	**A:** The expression describes missing satisfaction, not the amount of effort required. **C:** The disappointment comes from the cost of winning, not simply from a lack of attention. **D:** The result is settled; the question concerns how the winner experiences it.
5B	evidence	**C**	“Winning gave her little joy; the project had cost her a friendship she valued.” is the detail that shows “a hollow victory” means “a win that feels empty despite the outward success.”	**A:** The detail “Sasha’s team received the highest score for its model bridge at the school exhibition.” **B:** The detail “Their classmates gathered around the display while a judge attached the award ribbon.” **D:** The detail “Before leaving the exhibition, she placed the ribbon inside the project folder.”

Talk bonus (seam): A seam is the line where two currents meet, often where faster water runs beside slower water.

River trip 4: North Tongue River

Stop	Word · skill	Key	Why it fits	If they chose…
1	mitigate context clues · RI.8.4, L.8.4a	**D**	The detail “The mats did not stop the rain, but they kept much of the mud from reaching the hallway.” supports “reduce the severity of a problem”.	**A:** The action lessens the problem without guaranteeing that every cause disappears. **B:** The passage concerns reducing harm, not concealing information. **C:** The passage describes an action intended to improve the situation.
2	disproportionate word parts · RI.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.4b	**B**	The detail “A team with only a few members was assigned almost half of the entire project.” supports “not in proper balance with another amount”.	**A:** The comparison reveals a difference in burden or effect, not merely appearance. **C:** The passage identifies an imbalance rather than equality. **D:** The word concerns relative amounts, not whether something can be physically separated.
3	candid shades of meaning · RL.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.5c	**D**	The detail “She said plainly that the opening was confusing, then showed me the places where she had lost track of the explanation.” supports “honest and open about an uncomfortable truth”.	**A:** Honesty does not require cruelty, and the passage distinguishes the response from an attack. **B:** The speaker states the issue plainly rather than disguising it. **C:** The response addresses what the speaker actually knows rather than making unsupported claims.
4	disposition multiple meanings · RL.8.4, L.8.4a	**D**	The detail “Even when a delivery was late or a plan fell apart, she usually searched for something that could still be done.” supports “a usual pattern of mood or behavior”.	**A:** The passage describes how a person usually responds, not where objects are positioned. **B:** No property is being assigned; the context concerns someone’s habitual behavior. **C:** Repeated reactions point to a usual tendency rather than one brief mood.
5A	a moving target figurative language · RL.8.4, L.8.4a, L.8.5a, RL.8.1	**C**	The detail “The committee had changed the required length and audience every time he revised the demonstration to match its last request.” supports “a goal that becomes hard to reach as it changes”.	**A:** The difficulty comes from the changing goal, not from the need to travel. **B:** The repeated changes prevent the characters from knowing when the work is complete. **D:** The expression describes changing expectations rather than someone’s physical movement.
5B	evidence	**D**	“changed the required length and audience every time he revised the demonstration” is the detail that shows “a moving target” means “a goal that becomes hard to reach as it changes.”	**A:** The detail “spent the weekend preparing a demonstration for the club committee’s open evening” belongs to the situation, but does not establish the meaning of “a moving target”. **B:** The detail “He asked the committee to agree on one description before he rebuilt the demonstration again.” **C:** The detail “The boxes stayed beneath the workshop table until the meeting ended.”

Talk bonus (tailout): It is the shallow downstream end of the pool, where water flows into the next run.

TEACHER COPY · CLASS RECORD SHEET

Upstream Vocabulary on paper · Grade 8

Use initials or class codes only. One row per student per trip. Copy this page for more students.

Student (initials or code)	River trip #	Stop 1	Stop 2	Stop 3	Stop 4	Stop 5 · Part A	Stop 5 · Part B	Next step / notes

In each stop cell write ✓ if the FIRST answer was right, or ★ if the student fixed it after rereading. Leave it blank if it was still missed. Count only ✓ as first answers, as the online game does; ★ fixes are shown but counted separately. Part A and Part B of stop 5 are recorded separately.