

Name _____ Class _____

Target Lesson: Finding the Meaning of Unknown Words with “Just Once”

PART 1: Warm-Up

Directions: Look at the picture and answer one of the questions.

In American football, a lineman protects other players on their team and stops the other team from making plays.



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Today you’re going to read about a boy who is a lineman on his high school football team.

- Think of a team sport you have played. Is there a specific position you have played? Why is that position important?

OR

- Think of a team sport you would like to play. What position would you want to play, and why?

Take **three minutes** to write down your ideas.

Name _____ Class _____

PART 2: Target Skill Video: Unknown Words

Directions: Watch the video and then answer the question.

1. What sentences should you re-read when determining the meaning of an unknown word?

Steps for Finding the Meaning of Unknown Words:

1. Reread the sentence the word is in.
Does the context help reveal its meaning?
2. Reread the sentences before and after the word.
Does the additional context help reveal its meaning now?
3. Replace the unknown word with your new definition.
Ask yourself: Does it make sense?

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PART 3: Reading and Answering Questions

Directions: Read the text and answer the questions.

Just Once

by Thomas Dygard

[1] Everybody liked the Moose. To his father and mother he was Bryan — as in Bryan Jefferson Crawford — but to everyone at Bedford City High he was the Moose. He was large and strong, as you might imagine from his nickname, and he was pretty fast on his feet — sort of nimble, you might say — considering his size. He didn't have a pretty face but he had a quick and easy smile — “sweet,” some of the teachers called it; “nice,” others said.

[2] But on the football field, the Moose was neither sweet nor nice. He was just strong and fast and a little bit devastating as the left tackle of the Bedford City Bears. When the Moose blocked somebody, he stayed blocked. When the Moose was called on to open a hole in the line for one of the Bears' runners, the hole more often than not resembled an open garage door.

[3] Now in his senior season, the Moose had twice been named to the all-conference team and was considered a cinch for all-state.¹ He spent a lot of his spare time, when he wasn't in a classroom or on the football field, reading letters from colleges eager to have the Moose pursue higher education — and football — at their institution.

[4] But the Moose had a hang-up.

[5] He didn't go public with his hang-up until the sixth game of the season. But, looking back, most of his teammates agreed that probably

Paragraph 2

1. What is the meaning of the word “devastating” in paragraph 2?

Need help with this skill? Review Part 2.

- A. destructive
- B. graceful
- C. handsome
- D. sneaky

¹ A team that represents the whole state, rather than one school or district

the Moose had been nurturing the hang-up secretly for two years or more.

[6] The Moose wanted to carry the ball.

[7] For sure, the Moose was not the first interior lineman in the history of football, or even the history of Bedford City High, who banged heads up front and wore bruises like badges of honor — and dreamed of racing down the field with the ball to the end zone while everybody in the bleachers screamed his name.

[8] But most linemen, it seems, are able to stifle the urge. The idea may pop into their minds from time to time, but in their hearts they know they can't run fast enough, they know they can't do that fancy dancing to elude² tacklers, they know they aren't trained to read blocks. They know that their strengths and talents are best utilized in the line. Football is, after all, a team sport, and everyone plays the position where he most helps the team. And so these linemen, or most of them, go back to banging heads without saying the first word about the dream that flickered through their minds.

[9] Not so with the Moose.

[10] That sixth game, when the Moose's hang-up first came into public view, had ended with the Moose truly in all his glory as the Bears' left tackle. Yes, glory — but uncheered and sort of anonymous.³ The Bears were trailing 21-17 and had the ball on Mitchell High's five-yard line, fourth down, with time running out. The rule in such a situation is simple — the best back carries the ball behind the best blocker — and it is a rule seldom violated by those in control of their faculties.⁴ The Bears, of course, followed the rule. That meant Jerry Dixon running

Paragraph 9

2. What does the phrase "pop into their minds" suggest about the linemen's thoughts in paragraph 8?

² **Elude** (*verb*): to avoid

³ having an unknown name or identity

⁴ mental or physical powers

behind the Moose's blocking. With the snap of the ball, the Moose knocked down one lineman, bumped another one aside, and charged forward to flatten an approaching linebacker. Jerry did a little jig behind the Moose and then ran into the end zone, virtually untouched, to win the game.

[11] After circling in the end zone a moment while the cheers echoed through the night, Jerry did run across and hug the Moose, that's true. Jerry knew who had made the touchdown possible.

[12] But it wasn't the Moose's name that everybody was shouting. The fans in the bleachers were cheering Jerry Dixon.

[13] It was probably at that precise moment that the Moose decided to go public.

[14] In the dressing room, Coach Buford Williams was making his rounds among the cheering players and came to a halt in front of the Moose. "It was your great blocking that did it," he said.

[15] "I want to carry the ball," the Moose said.

[16] Coach Williams was already turning away and taking a step toward the next player due an accolade when his brain registered the fact that the Moose had said something strange. He was expecting the Moose to say, "Aw, gee, thanks, Coach." That was what the Moose always said when the coach issued a compliment. But the Moose had said something else. The coach turned back to the Moose, a look of disbelief on his face. "What did you say?"

[17] "I want to carry the ball."

Paragraph 17

3. In paragraph 16, the word "accolade" reveals that Coach Williams...

- A. disapproves of the team's behavior.
- B. praises the boys on the team for their performance.
- C. complains about the boys' performance on the field.
- D. makes humorous comments to cheer the boys up after the game.

[18] Coach Williams was good at quick recoveries, as any high-school football coach had better be. He gave a tolerant smile and a little nod and said, “You keep right on blocking, son.”

[19] This time Coach Williams made good on his turn and moved away from the Moose.

[20] The following week’s practice and the next Friday’s game passed without further incident. After all, the game was a road game over at Cartwright High, thirty-five miles away. The Moose wanted to carry the ball in front of the Bedford City fans.

[21] Then the Moose went to work.

[22] He caught up with the coach on the way to the practice field on Wednesday. “Remember,” he said, leaning forward and down a little to get his face in the coach’s face, “I said I want to carry the ball.”

[23] Coach Williams must have been thinking about something else because it took him a minute to look up into the Moose’s face, and even then he didn’t say anything.

[24] “I meant it,” the Moose said.

[25] “Meant what?”

[26] “I want to run the ball.”

[27] “Oh,” Coach Williams said. Yes, he remembered. “Son, you’re a great left tackle, a great blocker. Let’s leave it that way.”

[28] The Moose let the remaining days of the practice week and then the game on Friday night against Edge-wood High pass while he reviewed strategies. The review led him to Dan Blevins, the Bears’

quarterback. If the signal-caller would join in, maybe Coach Williams would listen.

[29] “Yeah, I heard,” Dan said. “But, look, what about Joe Wright at guard, Bill Slocum at right tackle, even Herbie Watson at center. They might all want to carry the ball. What are we going to do — take turns? It doesn’t work that way.”

[30] So much for Dan Blevins.

[31] The Moose found that most of the players in the backfield agreed with Dan. They couldn’t see any reason why the Moose should carry the ball, especially in the place of themselves. Even Jerry Dixon, who owed a lot of his glory to the Moose’s blocking, gaped in disbelief at the Moose’s idea. The Moose, however, got some support from his fellow linemen. Maybe they had dreams of their own, and saw value in a precedent.⁵

[32] As the days went by, the word spread — not just on the practice field and in the corridors of Bedford City High, but all around town. The players by now were openly taking sides. Some thought it a jolly good idea that the Moose carry the ball. Others, like Dan Blevins, held to the purist line — a left tackle plays left tackle, a ballcarrier carries the ball, and that’s it.

[33] Around town, the vote wasn’t even close. Everyone wanted the Moose to carry the ball.

[34] “Look, son,” Coach Williams said to the Moose on the practice field the Thursday before the Benton Heights game, “this has gone far enough. Fun is fun. A joke is a joke. But let’s drop it.”

[35] “Just once,” the Moose pleaded.

⁵ an action that may serve as an example for future acts of the same nature

[36] Coach Williams looked at the Moose and didn't answer.

[37] The Moose didn't know what that meant.

[38] The Benton Heights Tigers were duck soup for the Bears, as everyone knew they would be. The Bears scored in their first three possessions and led 28-0 at the half. The hapless Tigers had yet to cross the fifty-yard line under their own steam.

[39] All the Bears, of course, were enjoying the way the game was going, as were the Bedford City fans jamming the bleachers.

[40] Coach Williams looked irritated when the crowd on a couple of occasions broke into a chant: "Give the Moose the ball! Give the Moose the ball!"

[41] On the field, the Moose did not know whether to grin at hearing his name shouted by the crowd or to frown because the sound of his name was irritating the coach. Was the crowd going to talk Coach Williams into putting the Moose in the backfield? Probably not; Coach Williams didn't bow to that kind of pressure. Was the coach going to refuse to give the ball to the Moose just to show the crowd — and the Moose and the rest of the players — who was boss? The Moose feared so.

[42] In his time on the sideline, when the defensive unit was on the field, the Moose, of course, said nothing to Coach Williams. He knew better than to break the coach's concentration during a game — even a runaway victory — with a comment on any subject at all, much less his desire to carry the ball. As a matter of fact, the Moose was careful to stay out of the coach's line of vision, especially when the crowd was chanting "Give the Moose the ball!"

[43] By the end of the third quarter the Bears were leading 42-0. Coach Williams had been feeding substitutes into the game since halftime, but the Bears kept marching on. And now, in the opening minutes of the fourth quarter, the Moose and his teammates were standing on the Tigers' five-yard line, about to pile on another touchdown.

[44] The Moose saw his substitute, Larry Hinden, getting a tap on the shoulder and then running onto the field. The Moose turned to leave.

[45] Then he heard Larry tell the referee, "Hinden for Holbrook."

[46] Holbrook? Chad Holbrook, the fullback?

[47] Chad gave the coach a funny look and jogged off the field.

[48] Larry joined the huddle and said, "Coach says the Moose at fullback and give him the ball."

[49] Dan Blevins said, "Really?"

[50] "Really."

[51] The Moose was giving his grin — "sweet," some of the teachers called it; "nice," others said.

[52] "I want to do an end run," the Moose said.

[53] Dan looked at the sky a moment, then said, "What does it matter?"

[54] The quarterback took the snap from center, moved back and to his right while turning, and extending the ball to the Moose.

[55] The Moose took the ball and cradled it in his right hand. So far, so good. He hadn't fumbled. Probably both Coach Williams and Dan were surprised.

Paragraph 43

4. What does the phrase "kept marching on" suggest about the Bears' actions in paragraph 43?

[56] He ran a couple of steps and looked out in front and said aloud, “Whoa!”

[57] Where had all those tacklers come from?

[58] The whole world seemed to be peopled with players in red jerseys — the red of the Benton Heights Tigers. They all were looking straight at the Moose and advancing toward him. They looked very determined, and not friendly at all. And there were so many of them. The Moose had faced tough guys in the line, but usually one at a time, or maybe two. But this — five or six. And all of them heading for him.

[59] The Moose screeched to a halt, whirled, and ran the other way.

[60] Dan Blevins blocked somebody in a red jersey breaking through the middle line, and the Moose wanted to stop running and thank him. But he kept going.

[61] His reverse had caught the Tigers’ defenders going the wrong way, and the field in front of the Moose looked open. But his blockers were going the wrong way, too. Maybe that was why the field looked so open. What did it matter, though, with the field clear in front of him. This was going to be a cakewalk; the Moose was going to score a touchdown.

[62] Then, again — “Whoa!”

[63] Players with red jerseys were beginning to fill the empty space — a lot of them. And they were all running toward the Moose. They were kind of low, with their arms spread, as if they wanted to hit him hard and then grab him.

Paragraph 61

5. What does the word “cakewalk” suggest about the Moose’s thoughts about making a touchdown in paragraph 61?

[64] A picture of Jerry Dixon dancing his little jig and wriggling between tacklers flashed through the Moose's mind. How did Jerry do that? Well, no time to ponder that one right now.

[65] The Moose lowered his shoulder and thundered ahead, into the cloud of red jerseys. Something hit his left thigh. It hurt. Then someone pounded his hip, then his shoulder. They both hurt. Somebody was hanging on to him and was a terrible drag. How could he run with somebody hanging on to him? He knew he was going down, but maybe he was across the goal: He hit the ground hard, with somebody coming down on top of him, right on the small of his back.

[66] The Moose couldn't move. They had him pinned. Wasn't the referee supposed to get these guys off?

[67] Finally the load was gone and the Moose, still holding the ball, got to his knees and one hand, then stood.

[68] He heard the screaming of the crowd, and he saw the scoreboard blinking.

[69] He had scored.

[70] His teammates were slapping him on the shoulder pads and laughing and shouting.

[71] The Moose grinned, but he had a strange and distant look in his eyes.

[72] He jogged to the sideline, the roars of the crowd still ringing in his ears.

[73] "Okay, son?" Coach Williams asked.

[74] The Moose was puffing. He took a couple of deep breaths. He relived for a moment the first sight of a half dozen players in red

jerseys, all with one target — him. He saw again the menacing horde of red jerseys that had risen up just when he'd thought he had clear sailing to the goal. They all zeroed in on him, the Moose, alone.

[75] The Moose glanced at the coach, took another deep breath, and said, "Never again."

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Paragraph 75

6. What does the phrase "menacing horde" suggest about how the Moose view of the opposing team's players in paragraph 74?

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PART 4: Assessment

Directions: Answer the questions.

1. What is the meaning of the word “purist” as it is used in paragraph 32?

- A. courageous
- B. exceptional
- C. outrageous
- D. traditional

2. What are two characteristics that describe the Moose? Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.
