

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Word Choice & Meaning

Read the short story and answer each question.



Nora and the Echo Tree

In the hills above Willow Glen stood a massive tree known as the Echo Tree. They said it repeated anything you said—but *it also added a twist*.

Twelve-year-old Nora didn't believe the rumors. "Trees don't talk," she said. But when she finally visited the Echo Tree, she whispered a silly phrase:

"I'm so hungry, I could eat a mountain."

The tree echoed back, but instead of her voice, she heard a deep rumble—and *a nearby boulder cracked open to reveal a tunnel full of glowing berries*.

Nora stared. "Okay... maybe it does talk."

Each time Nora spoke a **nonliteral** phrase, the tree seemed to bring it to life. "My brain's fried!" she once shouted after a long hike—and the trail behind her sizzled like bacon in a pan.

But one day, Nora got frustrated and snapped, "I wish I could disappear."

The tree echoed her words—and her shadow vanished.

Panicked, Nora ran back. "I didn't *mean* it!"

The tree whispered: "Words have wings and weight."

From then on, Nora chose her phrases more carefully—balancing her wild imagination with thoughtful expression.



Name: _____

Nora and the Echo Tree

1. What happens when Nora says "I'm so hungry I could eat a mountain"?

- A. She eats a mountain
- B. A tunnel of glowing berries appears
- C. The tree gives her a sandwich
- D. She starts climbing the mountain

2. What lesson does Nora learn from the Echo Tree?

- A. That trees can be funny
- B. That words are powerful and should be chosen wisely
- C. That food grows underground
- D. That silence is better than speaking

3. Fill in the blank:

The Echo Tree repeated Nora's words but added a magical _____ to them.

4. Find two examples of nonliteral language in the story. What do they really mean?

5. How does the Echo Tree help Nora understand the power of words?



Parent and Teacher Guide

Guide Reading Level: O

Lexile Level: 590L-740L

Grade Level: 3rd Grade, Middle of the Year

Genre: Fantasy

Introducing the Text

"In this fantasy story, a magical tree echoes Nora's words in surprising ways. As we read, we'll practice identifying nonliteral language—phrases that don't mean exactly what they say—and talk about how these phrases can affect both characters and readers."

Vocabulary: echo, nonliteral, phrase, vanish, imagination

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you know about literal vs. nonliteral phrases?
 2. Have you ever said something that sounded silly but meant something real?
 3. What kind of story would include a magical tree that listens?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. What happens when Nora uses creative phrases?
 2. Why is the phrase "words have wings and weight" important?
 3. What does the Echo Tree seem to be teaching Nora?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think authors use nonliteral language in stories?
 2. How do nonliteral phrases make the story more exciting or meaningful?
 3. How might Nora speak differently in the future?
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Activity Idea

Create a "**Literal vs. Nonliteral Gallery Walk.**" Students write down one nonliteral phrase from the story and draw what it would look like if taken literally (e.g., "brain's fried"). Then, on a second card, they write the real meaning. Hang them side by side and walk the class through, discussing the humor and deeper meaning behind figurative expressions.

