Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \*I CAN USE A REFERENCE MATERIAL (DICTIONARY) TO

 DETERMINE THE MEANING OF A KEY WORD.

 \*I CAN USE CONTEXT CLUES TO DETERMINE THE

 MEANING OF A WORD.

***The Red Fox* by Donna Stringfellow**

IT WAS COLD in the forest. A bitter March wind rattled bare trees like skeletons and whipped up the dark clouds in an iron gray sky. The approaching snow storm probably would not be the last one of the winter.

The red fox couldn’t have chosen a worse time to bring a litter of kits into the world. Nestled in a small hollow beneath a hickory tree, curled against their mother’s plush fur, the three young kits were warm and comfortable. But when the freezing storms came, the shallow nest would surely let in the snow. And it would be too easy for predators to find them when their mother left to search for food. The fox knew she would have to seek a new home, and soon.

She nuzzled her kits, whose eyes were not yet open. She licked them, and they mewed about her like kittens. Then she left them. Outside her den, cold air stung her nose as she sniffed about for danger. Then she padded off into the gray, wintry forest.

She ducked beneath a wooden fence and followed a path across a familiar field, where during the summer she’d chased rabbits. She was near a farm, a place she’d always avoided because of the fearful smell of humans. But now, the warmth and protection of the barn drew her close. Squeezing through the gap where a board was missing, she sneaked into the barn. The straw was deep and soft, a perfect bed for fox kits.

The red fox hurried back to her babies. One by one she carried them under the fence, across the field, and through the hole in the barn wall. And when all three kits were nestled down in the blanket of straw, she licked them and felt safe. Even when the farmer came to milk his cows, the silent fox knew her family would be unnoticed, hidden in the farthest and darkest corner of the barn.

One snowy evening, the farmer turned off his lantern and hung it on the wall as he left the barn, just as he did every night. But as he closed the door, the lantern slipped from its hook and shattered on the floor. A tiny spark danced across the pool of keroseneand nibbled at the scattered straw.

The fox watched with wide, yellow eyes as the straw curled and caught flame. Wisps of smoke reached her nostrils, and she became fearful. Slipping through the hole in the wall, she ran outside and howled. Her voice carried across the barnyard, and the farmer turned around. He was surprised and angry to see a fox. He was even more angry to see it run into his barn.

Setting down his milk pail, the farmer headed back to his barn, determined to chase away the unwelcome visitor. But when he threw open the barn door, fire danced about his feet. Grabbing a shovel, he beat the flames until they were out. Once again, the barn was safe and dark.

Taking up a flashlight, the farmer shone its beam about the barn. It finally came to rest on the fox, her family nestled close, her eyes shining gold. The farmer smiled. He flicked off the light and walked away, quietly closing the barn door behind him.

Winter’s harshness gave way to spring’s gentle warmth. One day the farmer glanced into the darkest corner of the barn and found it empty. But for a time it had been a place to feel safe. It had been home to a red fox family.

1. Read the paragraph below.

The red fox couldn’t have chosen a worse time to bring a litter of kits into the world. Nestled in a small hollow beneath a hickory tree, curled against their mother’s plush fur, the three young kits were warm and comfortable. But when the freezing storms came, the shallow nest would surely let in the snow. And it would be too easy for predators to find them when their mother left to search for food. The fox knew she would have to seek a new home, and soon.

In the paragraph above, the word kits means \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**A.** furry fox

**B.** ancient fox

**C.** newborn fox

**D.** wild fox

## Nestled Pronunciation: nes·tled

1. Settled in a spot securely or snugly.

Use the definition above and choose the sentence that uses the correct meaning of the bolded word.

**A.** He nestled himself into the hay for a short summer nap.

**B.** The predator nestled his prey before catching up with it.

**C.** The police car nestled the robber as it chased behind him.

**D.** The young girl nestled her pencil as she wrote the paper.

1. Read the sentence below and answer the question.

Wisps of smoke reached her nostrils, and she became fearful.

Identify the meaning of the underlined word.

**A.** slice, cut, chunk

**B.** whiz, rush, shoot

**C.** straw, hair, grass

**D.** lines,fragments, streaks