Name _____ Date _____

Reading Comprehension

Context Clues

Read the passage below. Answer the questions that follow.

On Your Own

Read the article about Mars. As you read, think about the underlined words. Look for context clues that will help you understand these words.

Mission to Mars

For hundreds of years, people have gazed upward at Mars in the night sky and wondered, "What is it like up there? Does anyone live there?" They had to wait to actually investigate the planet until 1965 when a spacecraft, *Mariner 4*, landed on Mars. Several other probes followed. A lander named *Pathfinder* finally was launched toward Mars on December 4, 1996. This mission to Mars told people a lot about the planet nearest Earth in the solar system.

Pathfinder landed on Mars on July 4, 1997. Airbags helped soften the impact of the landing so that the craft would not be damaged. Then a door in *Pathfinder* opened and out came *Sojourner*, a six-wheeled robot rover designed to take pictures and collect information. *Sojourner* traveled over the surface of Mars collecting information about the planet's rocks and soil. Scientists on Earth controlled the movements of *Sojourner* as it explored the Martian terrain.



The *Pathfinder* mission was a great success. The spacecraft itself operated three times longer than scientists had expected. The rover worked twelve times longer. *Sojourner* sent 2.6 billion bits of information back to Earth, including more than 16,000 images, or pictures. Here are some of the things *Pathfinder* helped scientists learn:

- It is probable that there is sand on Mars.
- The atmosphere of Mars has clouds.
- Floods may have once ravaged the planet's surface.
- Temperatures fluctuate from extreme hot to cold.

Exploring Mars may reveal whether there could be life anywhere else in the universe. Information about the climate on Mars can help people understand climatic changes on Earth. Scientists also harbor hopes to terraform Mars, which would make it possible for humans to live there. The United States is looking toward the future by planning more missions to Mars.

1. The word *probes* means _____.
   a. Exploration machines
   b. Tape recorders
   c. Digital cameras

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d. Test tubes

2. The word *impact* means _____.
   a. Rocket launch
   b. Flat surfaces
   c. A crash
   d. Orbiting planet

3. The word *terraform* means _____.
   a. Make possible for humans to live somewhere
   b. Explore the solar system with astronauts
   c. Spend more time and money make Earth livable.
   d. Find information about life elsewhere in the universe.

4. Look at the article again. Find the meaning of each word listed below. Write the meaning and the context clues that helped you.

Look at the article again. Find the meaning of each word listed below. Write the meaning and the context clues that helped you.

Word	Meaning	Context Clues
8. rover	_____	_____ _____
9. terrain	_____	_____
10. fluctuate	_____	_____

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