Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Correcting Vague Pronouns

Pronouns help writers to avoid repetition, but when a pronoun is ***vague***, or unclear, readers can't tell what or whom it refers to.

- A pronoun may be unclear if there is more than one noun to which the pronoun could be referring. For example:

Clear: The cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde were built by the Ancestral Pueblo people.

Unclear: They show us what life was like there thousands of years ago.

The pronoun *they* could refer to *cliff dwellings* or to *Ancestral Pueblo people*. You can fix the problem by changing the pronoun to the correct noun.

Clear: *These* dwellings show us what life was like there thousands of years ago.

- A pronoun may also be unclear if there is no noun to which the pronoun refers.

Unclear: Our days at Mesa Verde were long and full, and it taught us a lot.

Unclear: At home, people sometimes asked questions, and it was hard.

You can fix the first sentence by replacing the pronoun with a noun phrase, such as *the trip*. However, the second sentence might need a bit more work.

Clear: Our days at Mesa Verde were long and full, and *the trip* taught us a lot.

Clear: At home, people asked questions *that were hard to answer*.

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Read the paragraph. For numbers 1-4, choose the revision that corrects the vague pronoun in each numbered sentence in the paragraph.

The Ancestral Pueblo people moved to Mesa Verde around 550 C.E., but the cliff dwellings weren't built until around 1200 C.E. (1) They showed a high degree of skill in stone masonry. (2) They do not know why the Ancestral Pueblo people moved into the cliffs. (3) They might have been safer in harsh weather. (4) Whatever the reason these people moved to the cliffs, it is amazing.

1. _____.

2. _____.

3. _____.

4. _____.

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