More Than Shade

Tracing a central idea across an informational text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2 "Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that show what urban trees mean or do in each paragraph. Number one underlined detail in each paragraph 1, 2, and 3 to trace how the central idea develops.

Cooling the City

1 For generations, city leaders planted street trees mainly to make crowded neighborhoods look calmer and to offer shade to pedestrians. In the nineteenth century, reformers promoted parks and tree-lined boulevards as pleasant escapes from smoke and traffic. Yet the benefits were not shared evenly. Tree planting often followed wealthier development, while industrial areas and neighborhoods shaped by discriminatory housing policies received fewer trees. At first, urban forestry was treated as a beautification project. The pattern of where trees grew, however, showed that it also affected daily comfort and access to healthier public space.

2 By the late twentieth century, scientists had measured another effect: paved surfaces absorb sunlight and release heat slowly, making many cities warmer than nearby rural areas. This urban heat island effect can be strongest on blocks with little shade. Researchers also found that tree canopy is often lower in formerly redlined neighborhoods, where residents may face higher summer temperatures. Trees do not solve every problem, but their leaves can cool streets through shade and evaporation. These findings shifted the discussion. A tree was no longer only a decoration; its location could influence heat exposure, energy use, and health.

3 Today, some cities map canopy, surface temperature, and residents' needs before choosing planting sites. Programs may prioritize schoolyards, bus stops, and neighborhoods with limited shade rather than simply filling visible gaps along downtown streets. Officials also must plan for watering, pruning, and young trees that die during drought or heat waves. Community groups can help select species and protect new plantings, especially when residents have experienced failed projects before. This approach refines the purpose of urban forestry: planting trees matters, but maintaining them fairly and placing them where heat burdens are greatest matters more.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What central idea begins to emerge in paragraph 1?

2. How do the details about paved surfaces, tree canopy, and cooling in paragraph 2 shape the central idea?

3. How does paragraph 3 refine the passage's central idea?

4. Write an objective summary of the passage in 40 to 50 words.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence explanation of the passage's central idea. In sentence 1, state the central idea. In sentences 2 and 3, explain how one detail from paragraph 1 and one detail from paragraph 3 show how the idea develops. Do not quote the passage.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that show what urban trees mean or do in each paragraph. Number one underlined detail in each paragraph 1, 2, and 3 to trace how the central idea develops. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What central idea begins to emerge in paragraph 1?	**Urban tree planting may seem like beautification, but unequal access to trees affects comfort and access to healthier public spaces.**
2	How do the details about paved surfaces, tree canopy, and cooling in paragraph 2 shape the central idea?	**They show that trees can reduce heat exposure and affect health and energy use, making their location an equity issue rather than only a design choice.**
3	How does paragraph 3 refine the passage's central idea?	**It argues that fair urban forestry requires data-based placement, community involvement, and long-term maintenance, especially in places with greater heat burdens.**
4	Write an objective summary of the passage in 40 to 50 words.	**Urban tree planting began as a way to beautify streets and provide shade, but unequal canopy revealed broader consequences. Research linked sparse trees to urban heat and health risks. Cities now use data, community input, and maintenance plans to place trees more fairly where cooling is most needed.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The passage argues that urban forestry should be treated as an equity and public-health responsibility, not merely beautification. Paragraph 1 shows the issue emerging when tree planting favored wealthier areas, leaving other neighborhoods with fewer benefits. Paragraph 3 refines the idea by showing that cities use residents' needs to choose planting sites.

Accept equivalent central ideas that identify the shift from beautification to equitable heat reduction and public health. For the summary, require 40 to 50 words, an objective tone, and major ideas from all three paragraphs without minor details or opinions.