Punctuation in Practice

Notice how conventions make a field report precise and readable.

ELA.12.C.3 "Following Conventions"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline every colon and semicolon. Circle every apostrophe used to form a possessive noun, then notice how each mark clarifies the writer's meaning.

Prairie Plot Field Report

1 At 6:15 a.m., the restoration crew reached the prairie plot behind the city library. Overnight rain had darkened the soil, but the milkweed seedlings stood upright among the grasses. Lena checked each plant's tag, recording height, leaf damage, and signs of aphids in a weatherproof notebook. Her partner, Omar, photographed the eastern edge of the plot; its drainage ditch had overflowed during the storm. Before the group began weeding, the site manager reviewed one rule: remove invasive garlic mustard, but leave native goldenrod and asters untouched.

2 By 8:00, volunteers had filled three bags with garlic mustard. The work required patience: seedlings of the invasive plant sometimes resembled young native species. To avoid mistakes, the crew compared leaf shapes with a laminated guide and asked questions before pulling anything. Omar's photographs, however, revealed a second concern: runoff from the street had carried bits of plastic into the ditch. The volunteers divided the next tasks clearly: two people collected litter, three inspected the water's edge, and Lena updated the plot map on the clipboard before lunch.

3 At noon, the manager sent the day's observations to the parks department, which tracks restoration sites across the county. She noted that the plot's drainage problem could affect newly planted roots; she also requested a barrier near the ditch. The report included precise details, not guesses, because future crews would use it to plan their work. As the volunteers packed their tools, a monarch butterfly crossed the clearing and landed on a milkweed leaf. No one claimed the project was finished, yet everyone could see evidence of the prairie's recovery.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What punctuation mark follows “one rule” in paragraph 1, and what does it introduce?

2. The semicolon in paragraph 1 joins which two independent clauses?

3. In paragraph 2, what word is set off by commas in “Omar's photographs, however, revealed …”? What relationship does that word signal?

4. What does the apostrophe in “day's observations” in paragraph 3 show?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence field note about a community project that is different from the prairie work. Use a colon to introduce details, a semicolon to join two related independent clauses, and one singular possessive noun. Use standard capitalization and end punctuation.

ANSWER KEY

Punctuation in Practice

GRADE 12 · ELA.12.C.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline every colon and semicolon. Circle every apostrophe used to form a possessive noun, then notice how each mark clarifies the writer's meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What punctuation mark follows “one rule” in paragraph 1, and what does it introduce?	**A colon. It introduces the rule that follows.**
2	The semicolon in paragraph 1 joins which two independent clauses?	**“Her partner, Omar, photographed the eastern edge of the plot” and “its drainage ditch had overflowed during the storm.”**
3	In paragraph 2, what word is set off by commas in “Omar's photographs, however, revealed ...”? What relationship does that word signal?	**“However.” It signals a contrast between the earlier successful work and the newly discovered concern.**
4	What does the apostrophe in “day's observations” in paragraph 3 show?	**It shows that the observations belong to one day.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At the river cleanup, our team's checklist named three priorities: gloves, sorting bins, and a first-aid kit. Maya counted the full trash bags; the coordinator recorded their total. The group's report described the work clearly.

Accept equivalent explanations of the punctuation choices when they accurately identify the convention and its effect. For Part 3, check that the response has exactly three sentences and correctly uses a colon, a semicolon between independent clauses, and a singular possessive noun.