Beavers Build Cities

Analyze how organization and features shape an informational text.

ELA.12.R.2.1 "Evaluate the structure(s) and features in texts, identifying how the author could make the text(s) more effective."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that defines a key term, circle the sentence that shifts the text to a new focus, and number the three action steps in paragraph 3. Use these marks to judge which choices help readers and which could be clearer.

When Beavers Move In

1 At dawn, a beaver slips through a restored stream in a city park, carrying a branch to its lodge. This scene may seem unusual, but beavers are returning to some urban waterways as cities remove old barriers and protect streamside vegetation. Their dams slow moving water, creating ponds and wetlands. Those wetlands can hold water after heavy rain and provide habitat for insects, fish, birds, and amphibians. Yet a dam near a road, trail, or drainage pipe can also cause flooding. Urban wildlife managers must decide when a beaver's engineering helps a neighborhood and when it creates a risk.

2 To manage that trade-off, several cities use flow devices, pipes that let water pass through a dam without requiring workers to destroy it. A device can reduce flooding while allowing the beaver to remain, although it needs inspection after storms. Supporters argue that this approach is cheaper than repeatedly removing dams. Critics point out that installation costs, staff time, and public safety conditions differ from one site to another. The next section considers people who live near the water. Each choice depends on the setting, not on a single rule.

3 Residents also shape the outcome. A trail user may value a pond where turtles gather, while a homeowner may worry about water reaching a basement. Public meetings can reveal these competing concerns before a city chooses a response. The final decision should consider the dam's location, the predicted water level, and the animals using the wetland. Beavers are not simply pests or heroes. A city can first map nearby buildings and drainage pipes, then inspect the site after rain, then invite residents to comment. This sequence gives officials a way to weigh ecological benefits against possible damage before choosing removal, a flow device, or no action.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What organizational move occurs from paragraph 1 to paragraph 2? Explain how this move helps the reader follow the text.

2. How does the phrase "pipes that let water pass through a dam" help readers understand flow devices? Name one feature that could make this explanation more effective.

3. Evaluate the claim that flow devices are cheaper than repeatedly removing dams. What evidence feature is missing that would make this claim more convincing?

4. Paragraph 3 presents three actions in a sequence. What specific structural change could make that sequence easier to use, and why?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80-100 word editor's note proposing two revisions that would make the flow-device discussion more effective. Include one structural revision and one text feature, and explain how each would help readers evaluate flow devices.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that defines a key term, circle the sentence that shifts the text to a new focus, and number the three action steps in paragraph 3. Use these marks to judge which choices help readers and which could be clearer. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What organizational move occurs from paragraph 1 to paragraph 2? Explain how this move helps the reader follow the text.	**The text moves from explaining the benefits and risks of beaver dams to describing one management response, flow devices. This progression helps readers see why the response is needed.**
2	How does the phrase "pipes that let water pass through a dam" help readers understand flow devices? Name one feature that could make this explanation more effective.	**The phrase directly defines what a flow device does. A labeled diagram or a brief local example could make the explanation clearer.**
3	Evaluate the claim that flow devices are cheaper than repeatedly removing dams. What evidence feature is missing that would make this claim more convincing?	**The claim needs support such as cost data, a cited source, or a named city example comparing the two approaches.**
4	Paragraph 3 presents three actions in a sequence. What specific structural change could make that sequence easier to use, and why?	**The author could format the actions as a numbered list or add a heading for the decision process. This would make the order of the actions easier to scan and follow.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

First, place a short case study after the definition of a flow device. The case study should identify a real urban stream, describe the flooding concern, and report results such as maintenance costs or water levels. This structural addition would test the supporters' claim before the text presents the critics' concerns. Second, add a small comparison chart listing installation cost, inspection needs, and safety limits. The chart would let readers compare options quickly and see why a device may fit one site but not another.

Accept other evaluations when students identify a specific structural choice or feature from the passage and explain its effect on readers. Strong responses distinguish between a useful feature, such as the definition or action sequence, and needed support, such as data, a source, or a concrete example.