Comma Clues

Read a field note model and track how commas guide meaning.

ELA.7.C.3 "Following Conventions"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each comma that separates items in a series. Box each comma before and, but, or so when it joins two complete ideas.

Morning on the Prairie

1 At dawn, Maya joined the rangers at a prairie preserve in Kansas. They carried binoculars, field notebooks, and red-filtered flashlights. The group hoped to spot lesser prairie-chickens, but they stayed quiet near the birds' display ground. From a wooden blind, Maya watched tall grass bend in the wind. A male bird stamped his feet, puffed his throat sacs, and made a low booming call. The sound traveled across the open field while the sky turned violet above the preserve.

2 Before the survey began, the lead ranger explained the rules: stay on the path, record each sighting, and speak softly. Maya wrote the date, time, weather, and location in her notebook. She heard another call, so she raised her binoculars. A prairie-chicken appeared beside a clump of sagebrush, and it bowed toward a nearby female. Maya did not move because sudden motion could disturb the alert birds during their spring courtship season at the nearby display site.

3 By the end of the hour, Maya had recorded six calls and two sightings. The rangers would compare her notes with recordings from earlier mornings, and the information would help them track the birds' activity. Lesser prairie-chickens need large areas of grassland, but much of their habitat has been changed by farming, roads, and development. As the team left, Maya closed her notebook carefully. She had seen why patient observation matters for protecting wildlife in fragile places.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In the sentence that begins They carried, what three items are in the series? What do the commas do?

2. Copy the sentence that begins The group hoped. Why is there a comma before but?

3. Why is there a comma after call in the sentence She heard another call, so she raised her binoculars?

4. In the sentence that begins As the team left, which words form the opening word group? Why is there a comma after it?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write three sentences about planning a school event. Include one sentence with a series of three items, one compound sentence with a comma before and, but, or so, and one sentence that begins with an opening word group followed by a comma.

ANSWER KEY

Comma Clues

GRADE 7 · ELA.7.C.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each comma that separates items in a series. Box each comma before and, but, or so when it joins two complete ideas. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In the sentence that begins They carried, what three items are in the series? What do the commas do?	**The items are binoculars, field notebooks, and red-filtered flashlights. The commas separate items in a series.**
2	Copy the sentence that begins The group hoped. Why is there a comma before but?	**The group hoped to spot lesser prairie-chickens, but they stayed quiet near the birds' display ground. The comma comes before but because it joins two complete ideas.**
3	Why is there a comma after call in the sentence She heard another call, so she raised her binoculars?	**The comma comes before so because so joins two complete ideas.**
4	In the sentence that begins As the team left, which words form the opening word group? Why is there a comma after it?	**As the team left. The comma separates the opening word group from the main part of the sentence.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Students gathered posters, markers, and tape for the science fair. The tables were dusty, so we wiped them before visitors arrived. Before the doors opened, our team checked each display.

Accept equivalent explanations that identify commas separating series items or joining complete ideas with a coordinating conjunction. For the writing task, check that all three required comma uses are correct and that the response has three complete sentences.