Wolves and Webs

Trace connected central ideas through an ecosystem study.

ELA.7.R.2.2 "Compare two or more central ideas and their development throughout a text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that develop one central idea and circle details that develop a second central idea. Write 1, 2, or 3 beside each mark to show how the ideas develop across the paragraphs.

Wolves Return to Yellowstone

1 In 1995, wildlife managers released gray wolves into Yellowstone National Park after wolves had been absent there for about 70 years. The return began with 14 animals from Canada, followed by more releases the next year. Wolves hunted elk, a common prey animal. Scientists expected the predators to affect elk numbers and behavior, but they also watched for changes beyond the hunt. The project became a long-term study of how one returning species can influence an ecosystem.

2 As wolf packs settled, elk spent less time browsing in some streamside areas where they could be easier to catch. Willow and aspen in certain places grew taller, giving beavers more wood for dams. Beaver ponds can create habitat for fish, birds, and amphibians. These linked changes showed that predators may affect other species indirectly. However, plant growth also depended on rainfall, soil, and other animals, so researchers could not credit wolves alone for every change.

3 Scientists continued measuring elk, plants, scavengers, and waterways for years. Their work showed that Yellowstone's recovery did not follow one simple chain of events. Wolves changed where and when elk fed, while weather, hunting outside the park, and other factors affected elk populations. The research therefore offered two connected lessons: living things are tied together, and strong explanations require evidence from many observations rather than a single dramatic story over time and across places within the park.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What are two central ideas developed in the passage? State each idea in a phrase.

2. Compare paragraphs 1 and 2. How does each paragraph develop the idea that wolves can influence an ecosystem?

3. Compare paragraphs 2 and 3. How does each paragraph develop the idea that ecosystem changes do not have just one cause?

4. How does the final paragraph connect the passage's two central ideas?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write three sentences comparing how the passage develops its two central ideas. Include one detail from paragraph 1 and one detail from paragraph 3, then explain how the ideas connect.

ANSWER KEY # Wolves and Webs

GRADE 7 · ELA.7.R.2.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that develop one central idea and circle details that develop a second central idea. Write 1, 2, or 3 beside each mark to show how the ideas develop across the paragraphs. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What are two central ideas developed in the passage? State each idea in a phrase.	**Wolves can influence an interconnected ecosystem. Scientists need evidence from many factors and observations to explain ecosystem changes.**
2	Compare paragraphs 1 and 2. How does each paragraph develop the idea that wolves can influence an ecosystem?	**Paragraph 1 introduces the wolves' return and the expectation that they could affect elk and the ecosystem. Paragraph 2 gives examples of possible indirect effects, including elk browsing, plant growth, and beaver habitat.**
3	Compare paragraphs 2 and 3. How does each paragraph develop the idea that ecosystem changes do not have just one cause?	**Paragraph 2 notes that rainfall, soil, and other animals also affect plant growth. Paragraph 3 broadens the idea by naming weather, hunting, and other factors that affect elk populations.**
4	How does the final paragraph connect the passage's two central ideas?	**It explains that because living things and conditions are connected, scientists need many observations over time to explain changes responsibly.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Paragraph 1 introduces wolves as a returning species that could affect an ecosystem, and paragraph 3 explains changes in elk feeding. The passage also shows that researchers must study many factors over time. These ideas connect because broad evidence is needed to explain ecosystem changes responsibly.

Accept equivalent central ideas about wolves' ecosystem effects and the need for careful, multi-factor scientific evidence. Responses should compare development across paragraphs and use accurate details from the passage.