Build the Big Idea

Notice how an informational text builds and finishes an idea.

6.T.T.2.a "Recognize and describe expository techniques used to present and design content, including main ideas, facts, key details, and a sense of closure. (I)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence in each paragraph that states its main idea, circle two facts or key details that support those ideas, and box the final sentence, which brings the passage to a close.

Trees in City Spaces

1 On hot summer days, trees can make a neighborhood safer and more comfortable. Their leaves block some sunlight before it reaches sidewalks, playgrounds, and buildings. This shade can lower the temperature of surfaces that would otherwise become dangerously hot. Trees also release water vapor from their leaves, which can help cool the air nearby. For these reasons, city planners often plant trees along streets where people walk, wait for buses, and play outdoors each day.

2 Tree planting works best when communities plan for a tree's whole life. Young trees need regular water, especially during dry weeks, because their roots have not spread far through the soil. A mulch ring around the trunk helps soil hold moisture and can reduce weeds. Workers should keep mulch a few inches away from the bark, since mulch piled against it may trap moisture and cause damage. Careful planting and early care give a tree a better chance to grow strong.

3 Trees do more than cool a place. Their roots can slow rainwater as it moves over the ground, reducing erosion and helping some water soak into soil. Branches and leaves provide places for birds, insects, and other animals to find food or shelter. Still, a tree is not a quick fix for every problem. It needs space, care, and time to mature. By choosing suitable trees and caring for them, communities can build cooler, healthier outdoor spaces over many years.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What main idea does the first sentence of paragraph 1 introduce?

2. Name two key details from paragraph 2 that support the idea that young trees need care.

3. How do the rainwater and animal details in paragraph 3 support its opening sentence?

4. How do the last two sentences create closure for the whole passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an exactly four-sentence informational paragraph about a useful process or natural feature. State a main idea in sentence 1, include one accurate fact or key detail in sentences 2 and 3, and use sentence 4 to give the paragraph closure.

ANSWER KEY

Build the Big Idea

GRADE 6 · 6.T.T.2.a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence in each paragraph that states its main idea, circle two facts or key details that support those ideas, and box the final sentence, which brings the passage to a close. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What main idea does the first sentence of paragraph 1 introduce?	**Trees can make neighborhoods safer and more comfortable on hot summer days.**
2	Name two key details from paragraph 2 that support the idea that young trees need care.	**Young trees need regular water, and a mulch ring can help soil hold moisture and reduce weeds.**
3	How do the rainwater and animal details in paragraph 3 support its opening sentence?	**They show that trees do more than cool places because they reduce erosion and provide food or shelter for animals.**
4	How do the last two sentences create closure for the whole passage?	**They explain that trees need time and care, then end by showing the long-term benefit of cooler, healthier outdoor spaces.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Composting turns some food scraps and yard waste into material that can improve garden soil. Tiny organisms break down leaves and vegetable peels in a compost pile. The finished compost adds organic matter that helps soil hold water. By turning waste into a soil helper, composting supports healthier gardens.

Accept reasonable paraphrases of the main ideas, facts, and closure explanation when they are supported by the passage. For Part 3, check for exactly four sentences with a clear main idea, two accurate supporting details, and a final sentence that wraps up the idea.