From Scraps to Soil

Notice how an introduction leads into an explanation

4.W.2.a "Provide an introductory paragraph with a clear main idea."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence in the first paragraph that states the main idea. Circle one phrase that hints at how compost is made and one that hints at why it matters.

What Happens in a Compost Pile?

1. A compost pile can turn old plant scraps into a useful material for gardens. At first, it may look like a messy heap of peels, leaves, and grass. Yet tiny living things are at work inside it. With time and care, the scraps break down into compost, a dark, crumbly material that gardeners can mix into soil.

2. Bacteria and fungi begin breaking down the scraps. Worms and other small animals also eat bits of dead plants. As these living things work, they help turn big pieces into smaller ones. A gardener may mix the pile so air can reach more of it. Without enough air, the pile can become smelly and break down more slowly.

3. The finished compost has a job in the garden. Mixed into soil, it helps the soil hold water and gives plants some nutrients. This means a gardener can put many fruit peels and fallen leaves to use instead of throwing them away. A small pile behind a shed can help grow healthy flowers, vegetables, or trees.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which sentence in the first paragraph states the main idea? Copy it.

2. How does the first paragraph prepare you for the rest of the passage?

3. What detail from paragraph 2 could you add to the introduction to preview how compost is made? Write a new sentence in your own words.

4. What detail from paragraph 3 could you add to the introduction to preview why compost is useful? Write a new sentence in your own words.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an introductory paragraph for an informational piece about how a place in your community helps people. In four or five sentences, state a clear main idea and preview two details you would explain later.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence in the first paragraph that states the main idea. Circle one phrase that hints at how compost is made and one that hints at why it matters. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which sentence in the first paragraph states the main idea? Copy it.	**A compost pile can turn old plant scraps into a useful material for gardens.**
2	How does the first paragraph prepare you for the rest of the passage?	**It introduces the scraps, the living things that break them down, and the compost gardeners can use.**
3	What detail from paragraph 2 could you add to the introduction to preview how compost is made? Write a new sentence in your own words.	**Mixing the pile lets air reach the scraps as they break down.**
4	What detail from paragraph 3 could you add to the introduction to preview why compost is useful? Write a new sentence in your own words.	**Compost helps garden soil hold water.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A public library helps people learn and share ideas. Visitors can borrow books about animals, space, and many other topics. They can also use the library's computers to find information. These services make the library a helpful place for the whole community.

For the marking job, accept the first sentence as the underlined main idea and phrases about tiny living things and garden use as the circled hints. For Part 3, look for a clear main idea about a community place and two distinct details the writer could explain later.