Leaves at Work

Notice how word choice and sentence length shape an explanation.

5.W.2.e "Use appropriate language, vocabulary, and sentence variety to convey meaning; for effect; and to support a tone and formality appropriate to the topic and audience."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two precise words or terms about leaves or soil. Circle one short sentence that makes a point stand out.

Why Our Garden Keeps Some Leaves

1 Each autumn, our school garden wears a blanket of fallen leaves. Some leaves stay beneath the shrubs instead of going into bags. This layer is called leaf litter. It shades the soil and helps slow the loss of water on sunny days. A rake can clear the walking path while leaving the soil under the shrubs covered. The garden looks a little wild, but the leaves have work to do.

2 Small creatures help break down the leaves. Earthworms and pill bugs chew pieces, while fungi break down what remains. It takes time. As leaves decay, nutrients return to the soil, where plants can use them. If you gently lift a damp leaf, you might see tiny animals moving beneath it. Put the leaf back so their shelter stays in place.

3 Does this mean every leaf should stay on the ground? No. Leaves on a sidewalk can become slippery when wet, so the path should be cleared. Leaves can also pile too thickly on grass and block sunlight. In the garden beds, though, a thin layer can protect the soil. By choosing where to leave leaves, our school can care for both plants and people.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why is “leaf litter” clearer than “stuff” in the first paragraph?

2. How does “nutrients” explain more than “good things” would in the second paragraph?

3. What does the short sentence “It takes time” emphasize?

4. How does the question at the start of the last paragraph help students and families understand the advice?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence note for students about caring for a shared classroom bean plant. Use two precise plant words, one short sentence for emphasis, and a helpful, respectful tone.

ANSWER KEY

Leaves at Work

GRADE 5 · 5.W.2.e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two precise words or terms about leaves or soil. Circle one short sentence that makes a point stand out. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why is “leaf litter” clearer than “stuff” in the first paragraph?	**“Leaf litter” names the layer of fallen leaves covering the soil.**
2	How does “nutrients” explain more than “good things” would in the second paragraph?	**It names what returns to the soil from decaying leaves and can be used by plants.**
3	What does the short sentence “It takes time” emphasize?	**Breaking down leaves is a slow process.**
4	How does the question at the start of the last paragraph help students and families understand the advice?	**It raises a question readers may have, then the paragraph explains why leaves should be cleared from paths but can stay in garden beds.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our classroom bean plant needs sunlight, so keep it near a bright window. Touch the soil before you water it, and add water when the top feels dry. Check first. Too much water can leave the roots in soggy soil. A quick check helps our plant grow without wasting water.

For the marking job, accept precise terms such as “leaf litter,” “fungi,” and “nutrients.” Students may circle “It takes time” or “No” if they can explain what the short sentence emphasizes.