Dams With Consequences

Trace how details build and qualify a central idea.

RI.8.2 "Determine central ideas of a text, and analyze how they are developed through relationships of key details, citing textual evidence, paraphrasing or summarizing."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that best states the passage's central idea. Circle one detail in each paragraph that helps develop it, and number your circles 1, 2, and 3.

What a Beaver Dam Changes

1 At the edge of a dry meadow, a beaver piles branches across a narrow stream. Water slows behind the dam and spreads into nearby soil. In places where streams have cut deep channels, this water can reach plants that would otherwise stay dry. Wet ground also supports willows, insects, and birds. A beaver is not trying to repair an ecosystem; it is building a pond for shelter and easier access to food. Yet that simple construction can change the whole stream corridor.

2 Those changes can matter during a dry season. A pond holds water at the surface, while damp soil stores water around plant roots. When water moves more slowly, some sediment settles instead of washing downstream. As plants grow along the wetter banks, their roots can help hold soil in place. Scientists studying beaver sites have found that effects vary with the shape of the land and the amount of water available. A dam does not create new rainfall, but it can change where water stays.

3 Beaver dams can also block drainage pipes or flood roads and fields. People sometimes remove a dam to protect property, but beavers may rebuild it. In some locations, workers install a pipe through a dam to control the pond's height while leaving much of the structure in place. That option does not work everywhere, and it needs monitoring. Decisions about beavers therefore involve more than choosing between wildlife and people. Understanding how a dam affects both a stream and its neighbors helps communities decide where to make room for it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the beaver's reason for building a pond differ from the effect described in paragraph 1? Explain how that contrast develops an idea in the passage.

2. How do the details about damp soil and settling sediment in paragraph 2 work together to develop the passage's idea about dams? Cite both details.

3. How do the road and pipe details in paragraph 3 complicate the benefits described earlier? Cite evidence from paragraph 3.

4. What central idea ties all three paragraphs together? Support your answer with one detail from paragraph 1 and one from paragraph 3.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence summary for a neighborhood newsletter. State the passage's central idea, connect one water-related detail from paragraph 2 with one human-related detail from paragraph 3, and include a short quotation from paragraph 1 as evidence. Do not add an opinion.

ANSWER KEY

Dams With Consequences

GRADE 8 · RI.8.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that best states the passage's central idea. Circle one detail in each paragraph that helps develop it, and number your circles 1, 2, and 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the beaver's reason for building a pond differ from the effect described in paragraph 1? Explain how that contrast develops an idea in the passage.	**The beaver builds a pond for shelter and easier access to food, but the dam also spreads water into soil and supports other living things. This contrast shows how one dam can affect a wider area than the beaver's pond.**
2	How do the details about damp soil and settling sediment in paragraph 2 work together to develop the passage's idea about dams? Cite both details.	**Damp soil stores water around plant roots, and slower water lets some sediment settle rather than wash downstream. Together, these details show that a dam changes where water stays and how soil moves.**
3	How do the road and pipe details in paragraph 3 complicate the benefits described earlier? Cite evidence from paragraph 3.	**A dam may flood roads, so its benefits can come with costs for people. A pipe can control a pond's height while leaving much of the dam in place, but the passage says that option does not work everywhere.**
4	What central idea ties all three paragraphs together? Support your answer with one detail from paragraph 1 and one from paragraph 3.	**Beaver dams can help stream habitats, but people must consider their effects on nearby property. Paragraph 1 says water from a dam can reach dry plants, while paragraph 3 says dams can flood roads and fields.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Beaver dams can help streams and nearby habitats, but communities must also consider problems for people. As the passage says, a dam can "change the whole stream corridor" by spreading water into nearby soil. Water stored around plant roots can help keep the ground damp, while a pond that rises too high may flood a road. Workers can sometimes control the pond's height with a pipe, so a community's decision depends on how the dam affects both the land and its neighbors.

Accept other supported central ideas that include both the dam's effects on a stream and the need to consider nearby people. For the summary, check for exactly four sentences, the requested details, and a short, accurate quotation from paragraph 1.