Follow the Flow

How an explanation builds a case for rain gardens

12.3.R.6 "Students will analyze how informational text structures support the author's purpose."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read the passage, then write P beside the paragraph that presents a problem, M beside the paragraph that explains a mechanism, and L beside the paragraph that discusses limits; underline one phrase in each paragraph that supports your choice.

Where Does the Rain Go?

1. After a hard rain, a city curb can look like a narrow river. Water slides off roofs and pavement, collecting oil, grit, and bits of plastic before entering a storm drain. In some neighborhoods, a single intense storm can send water into streets faster than drains carry it away. A rain garden offers one small response: a planted, shallow depression placed where runoff can flow into it. To understand what this patch of plants can and cannot do, first consider the route water usually takes across a paved block.

2. On pavement, rain has little room to soak into the ground, so it travels quickly toward a drain. At a rain garden, a curb opening can divert some of that flow into a planted basin instead. Water briefly pools there, then moves through soil, where some particles are trapped. Plant roots help keep the soil open, and plants use some of the water. Designers may add an overflow outlet so excess water can continue into the drainage system during heavy storms. This sequence changes runoff's route, but it does not make the water disappear.

3. Still, a rain garden is not a substitute for every storm drain. Its effect depends on its size, soil, location, and maintenance; a basin filled with litter or compacted soil may hold less water. It also needs a safe route for overflow rather than sending water toward a building. These limits matter when a city chooses where to build one. The strongest case for rain gardens is not that they end flooding, but that they slow and absorb some runoff while adding planted space beside pavement that sheds much of its rain.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the author describe runoff on a paved block before explaining how a rain garden works?

2. How does the step-by-step sequence in the second paragraph help the author explain a rain garden's effect?

3. How does the contrast between pavement and a rain garden support the passage's purpose?

4. What does the final paragraph add to the explanation, and how does that addition affect the author's claim?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A neighborhood newsletter wants to help residents decide whether to request a rain garden on their block. In one paragraph of 80 to 110 words, propose a different order for this passage's information and one kind of local information the newsletter should seek; explain how both choices serve its readers.

ANSWER KEY

Follow the Flow

GRADE 12 · 12.3.R.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Read the passage, then write P beside the paragraph that presents a problem, M beside the paragraph that explains a mechanism, and L beside the paragraph that discusses limits; underline one phrase in each paragraph that supports your choice. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the author describe runoff on a paved block before explaining how a rain garden works?	**The opening establishes the runoff problem, so readers can understand what the rain garden's changed route is meant to address.**
2	How does the step-by-step sequence in the second paragraph help the author explain a rain garden's effect?	**It traces water from the curb opening into the basin, through soil, and, when necessary, through an overflow outlet. This shows how a garden slows and absorbs some runoff without making it disappear.**
3	How does the contrast between pavement and a rain garden support the passage's purpose?	**Pavement sends water quickly toward a drain, while a rain garden gives some water a place to pool and soak into soil. The contrast makes the garden's limited benefit clear.**
4	What does the final paragraph add to the explanation, and how does that addition affect the author's claim?	**It adds limits involving size, soil, location, maintenance, and overflow. Those limits make the claim more precise: rain gardens can reduce some runoff but cannot end flooding.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

For a neighborhood newsletter, I would begin with the limits: a rain garden needs suitable soil, regular care, and a safe overflow route. Residents deciding whether to request one should see those conditions before reading about benefits. Next, I would describe how a curb opening leads runoff into a planted basin and how water passes through its soil. I would end with the street flooding problem to show what the garden might help address. I would also seek local maintenance requirements and site rules, since general descriptions cannot show whether a particular block is suitable.

Accept different proposed orders if students explain how the order helps residents make a decision. The added information should be relevant to a local site and identified as something to seek, not presented as an unsupported fact.