Workers Beneath Our Feet

Read a model of clear, lively informative writing.

4.3.W.2 "Students will compose informative essays that: • introduce and develop a topic • incorporate evidence (e.g., specific facts, examples) • maintain an organized structure with transitional words and phrases • use sentence variety and word..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that states the main idea, circle two transition words, number two facts that support the main idea, and box one comparison that makes the explanation vivid.

The Busy Work of Earthworms

1 After a rainstorm, an earthworm may wriggle across a sidewalk. It looks small, but it can help change the ground beneath our feet. Earthworms live in moist soil and eat bits of dead leaves and other decaying plants. As they move and feed, they act like tiny underground gardeners. Their work helps make soil a better place for many plants to grow.

2 First, an earthworm pushes through soil and leaves narrow tunnels behind. These tunnels let air and water move through the ground. Plant roots need both air and water to grow. A root can also spread into spaces in loose soil more easily than in packed dirt. Picture a thin root reaching through the earth like a traveler following an open path.

3 Next, earthworms leave behind waste called castings. Castings contain nutrients that plants can use. For example, when worms eat dead leaves, some nutrients from those leaves return to the soil in their castings. Finally, earthworms mix bits of plant matter into the ground as they dig. With tunnels, castings, and mixing, these quiet workers help build healthy soil.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What main idea does the first paragraph introduce about earthworms?

2. Choose one fact from the passage. How does it support the main idea?

3. How do the words “First” and “Next” help organize the explanation?

4. The writer calls earthworms “tiny underground gardeners.” What does this comparison help you understand?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write one paragraph of 5 to 6 sentences explaining how to care for a houseplant. Introduce the topic, include two specific facts or examples, use at least two transition words, and add a comparison that helps readers picture a detail.

ANSWER KEY

Workers Beneath Our Feet

GRADE 4 · 4.3.W.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that states the main idea, circle two transition words, number two facts that support the main idea, and box one comparison that makes the explanation vivid. 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 paragraph introduce about earthworms?	**Earthworms help make soil a better place for plants to grow.**
2	Choose one fact from the passage. How does it support the main idea?	**The tunnels earthworms leave behind let air and water move through soil. Plants need air and water to grow.**
3	How do the words “First” and “Next” help organize the explanation?	**They guide the reader from how worms make tunnels to how they leave castings.**
4	The writer calls earthworms “tiny underground gardeners.” What does this comparison help you understand?	**It suggests that earthworms help plants by improving the soil, much as gardeners care for plants.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A houseplant can grow well when you care for its light, water, and soil. First, find out how much light your kind of plant needs. For example, some houseplants need bright light, while others grow well with less light. Next, check the soil before watering because different plants need water at different times. A pot without a drain hole can be like a bathtub that never empties. Finally, a hole in the pot lets extra water escape.

For question 2, accept any accurate passage fact paired with an explanation of how it helps plants or soil. In Part 3, accept varied houseplant advice if the facts are sound and the paragraph meets the stated writing requirements.