After the Fall

Read closely, then explain a text in your own words.

8.2.R.3 "Students will paraphrase a passage in their own words to demonstrate comprehension."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the main point of each paragraph and circle one detail that helps explain it. Use your marks to restate the passage in your own words.

A Fallen Tree's Second Life

1 After a windstorm, a fallen tree may look like a mess on the forest floor. Yet its work is not over. As fungi and bacteria break down the wood, the trunk becomes softer and holds moisture like a sponge. Seeds that land on its surface can sprout above the thick layer of leaves below. A decaying trunk that supports young plants is called a nurse log. Although many seeds never sprout, the damp wood gives some young roots a place to take hold.

2 A fallen log also becomes a crowded neighborhood. Beetles tunnel through its wood, and salamanders shelter underneath it where the ground stays cool. Woodpeckers may peck at insects in the log, while mushrooms grow from the rotting bark. These living things do not all use the log in the same way: some eat it, some hunt there, and others hide from heat or predators. If every fallen tree were hauled away, animals that depend on dead wood would have fewer places to find food and shelter.

3 As the log continues to decay, its materials return to the soil. Fungi and bacteria help turn tough wood into smaller pieces, and earthworms and other soil animals mix bits of it into the ground. This process can take years, depending on the tree and the conditions around it. Removing a log might make a trail look tidier, but it would interrupt this slow recycling in that spot. In forests where safety allows it, leaving some fallen trunks in place supports both new growth and the creatures already living there.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In your own words, explain why a seedling might grow on a fallen trunk instead of among the leaves on the ground.

2. Restate what it means for a fallen log to become a “crowded neighborhood.” Include two different ways living things use it.

3. In your own words, explain what happens to the log's materials as it decays.

4. Restate the trade-off described when people remove a fallen log from a trail area.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 55 to 75 word paraphrase of the whole passage for someone who has never heard of a nurse log. Explain the main idea and how a fallen trunk affects young plants, animals, and soil, using your own words.

ANSWER KEY

After the Fall

GRADE 8 · 8.2.R.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the main point of each paragraph and circle one detail that helps explain it. Use your marks to restate the passage in your own words. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In your own words, explain why a seedling might grow on a fallen trunk instead of among the leaves on the ground.	**The trunk offers a moist place above the leaf layer where a seed can sprout and its roots can take hold.**
2	Restate what it means for a fallen log to become a “crowded neighborhood.” Include two different ways living things use it.	**Many kinds of living things use the log. For example, salamanders hide beneath it, while woodpeckers search it for insects.**
3	In your own words, explain what happens to the log's materials as it decays.	**The wood breaks into smaller pieces, and soil animals help mix those pieces into the ground.**
4	Restate the trade-off described when people remove a fallen log from a trail area.	**Taking away the log may make the area look neater, but it stops the log from recycling its materials into the soil there.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A tree that falls in a forest can still help the area around it. As the wood breaks apart, its wet surface gives some seeds a better spot to begin growing. The trunk also offers insects and other animals places to eat or hide. Over time, tiny organisms help the wood become part of the soil, so leaving some logs supports the forest.

Accept accurate restatements that preserve the passage's meaning without copying its sentences. For the final response, check that students address plants, animals, and soil within the stated word range.