Monarch Message Marks

Notice how extra information is set off in a model science text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.2a "Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.*"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each nonrestrictive or parenthetical element in the passage. Circle the punctuation that sets it off, including comma pairs, parentheses, and pairs of dashes.

Following the Monarchs

1 Each autumn, millions of monarch butterflies begin a long trip south. The eastern population, which lives east of the Rocky Mountains, travels to mountain forests in central Mexico. Some butterflies fly more than 2,000 miles, a distance farther than many family road trips. They rest and feed along the way, stopping at fields with late-blooming flowers. No single monarch completes the whole yearly cycle. The overwintered adults begin moving north in spring; later generations continue the northward cycle.

2 To survive winter, monarchs cluster on oyamel fir trees, their shelter during cold mountain nights. The trees grow in a small region of Mexico, where cool, moist air helps the butterflies conserve energy. Visitors must stay on marked paths because noise and movement can disturb the clusters. A single colony may cover several trees. When the sun warms the forest, the insects open their wings, then close them again as temperatures fall. This behavior, scientists explain, helps the group manage changing conditions without flying far.

3 Researchers use tiny tags to follow monarchs, but the tags do not guide the insects. A tag (placed gently on a wing) carries a code that can be reported when the butterfly is found. Volunteers across North America share these reports with scientists. The information reveals routes that would be difficult to watch directly. One discovery -- surprising to many people -- is that monarchs can cross large bodies of water. For example, some monarchs fly across the Gulf of Mexico during migration.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what extra information is set off by the commas in the sentence about the eastern population?

2. Why can the words "which lives east of the Rocky Mountains" be removed without changing which population the sentence names?

3. In paragraph 2, which words are set off by commas in "This behavior, scientists explain, helps the group manage changing conditions"? What do those words add?

4. Rewrite this sentence from paragraph 3 by using parentheses instead of dashes: "One discovery -- surprising to many people -- is that monarchs can cross large bodies of water."

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write three factual sentences about an animal or natural event. In sentence 1, set off extra information with commas. In sentence 2, use parentheses. In sentence 3, use dashes.

ANSWER KEY

Monarch Message Marks

GRADE 6 · L.6.2a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each nonrestrictive or parenthetical element in the passage. Circle the punctuation that sets it off, including comma pairs, parentheses, and pairs of dashes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what extra information is set off by the commas in the sentence about the eastern population?	**which lives east of the Rocky Mountains**
2	Why can the words "which lives east of the Rocky Mountains" be removed without changing which population the sentence names?	**The words give extra information about the eastern population, which is already identified.**
3	In paragraph 2, which words are set off by commas in "This behavior, scientists explain, helps the group manage changing conditions"? What do those words add?	**scientists explain; they add an interrupting attribution that tells who explains the behavior.**
4	Rewrite this sentence from paragraph 3 by using parentheses instead of dashes: "One discovery -- surprising to many people -- is that monarchs can cross large bodies of water."	**One discovery (surprising to many people) is that monarchs can cross large bodies of water.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Green sea turtles, which are reptiles, breathe air at the surface. A hatchling (a newly hatched turtle) crawls toward the ocean. Many adult female sea turtles return to land -- usually at night -- to lay eggs.

Accept answers that correctly identify information that is extra to the sentence's main meaning and the punctuation that sets it off. For the open task, accept different accurate topics if each sentence uses the required punctuation to set off a parenthetical element.