What Seeds Save

Use textual evidence to examine a seed vault's promise and limits.

11-12.RI.1 "Accurately cite strong, relevant, and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly and inferentially, including determining where the text is open for interpretation."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details showing what the vault can do, circle two details showing what it cannot do, and number two details that could support different judgments about its success. Use your marks to find evidence for your answers.

A Backup Beneath the Mountain

1 Inside a mountain on Norway's Svalbard islands, shelves hold sealed packets of crop seeds. The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is designed as a backup for collections kept elsewhere, not as a farm or a shop for gardeners. Seed banks send duplicate samples, while the depositors retain ownership and control access to their own seeds. The cold, dry storage helps seeds remain viable for years, but it does not make them immortal. Keeping a packet in the vault protects a particular sample from damage at its home collection. It does not, by itself, put that crop into a farmer's field.

2 In 2015, researchers at the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas requested seeds they had deposited in the vault. Conflict in Syria had disrupted their original collection near Aleppo, so they used stored duplicates to rebuild research collections in Lebanon and Morocco. The withdrawal demonstrated that the backup could be used, not merely admired behind a locked door. Yet the researchers still had to grow plants, gather fresh seeds, and restore working collections. A packet leaving storage was a beginning, rather than proof that farmers already had crops suited to their fields.

3 Some people might call the withdrawal a success because the duplicates were available when a collection was endangered. Others might reserve that word for the later work of growing and distributing useful seeds. Both judgments can draw on the same event, but they measure different outcomes. The vault also cannot store every form of crop diversity: some plants are commonly preserved through living plants or tissues because their seeds do not survive conventional drying and freezing. Its value is therefore significant but specific. Whether it has "saved" a crop depends on whether saving means preserving a sample, rebuilding a collection, or restoring access for growers.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the vault designed to do? Cite two details from the first paragraph that establish its purpose and how it works.

2. Why does the 2015 withdrawal suggest that retrieving seeds is not the same as restoring crops to farmers? Cite two details from the second paragraph.

3. A reader calls the 2015 withdrawal a success. Cite one detail that supports this judgment and one that complicates it. Explain what each detail shows.

4. A headline claims, “The vault protects every crop.” How accurate is it? Evaluate the claim using one detail from the first paragraph and one from the third.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your city wants to protect local crop diversity. In one paragraph of 85 to 105 words, recommend one step to take alongside seed storage, support it with three distinct details from at least two paragraphs, and identify one uncertainty the passage leaves open about your proposal.

What Seeds Save

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details showing what the vault can do, circle two details showing what it cannot do, and number two details that could support different judgments about its success. Use your marks to find evidence for your answers. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the vault designed to do? Cite two details from the first paragraph that establish its purpose and how it works.	**It backs up seed collections kept elsewhere. Seed banks deposit duplicate samples, and cold, dry storage helps those samples remain viable.**
2	Why does the 2015 withdrawal suggest that retrieving seeds is not the same as restoring crops to farmers? Cite two details from the second paragraph.	**Researchers still had to grow plants and restore working collections. The passage also says the withdrawal did not prove that farmers had crops suited to their fields.**
3	A reader calls the 2015 withdrawal a success. Cite one detail that supports this judgment and one that complicates it. Explain what each detail shows.	**The available duplicates support calling it a success because researchers could retrieve them when a collection was disrupted. The need to grow plants and rebuild collections complicates that judgment because access to stored seeds was only a first step.**
4	A headline claims, "The vault protects every crop." How accurate is it? Evaluate the claim using one detail from the first paragraph and one from the third.	**The claim is too broad. The first paragraph describes protection for particular duplicate samples, while the third says some plants require preservation as living plants or tissues because their seeds cannot survive conventional drying and freezing.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A city council should pair a seed backup with a local growing program. The Svalbard vault keeps duplicate samples under cold, dry conditions, but a stored packet does not put crops in farmers' fields. After researchers withdrew seeds in 2015, they still had to grow plants and rebuild working collections. A local program could multiply seeds and test which varieties grow well nearby. The passage also notes that some crop diversity must be preserved as living plants or tissues, so a seed-only plan would miss it. The passage does not say how much land, funding, or time such a program would need.

Accept other defensible judgments when students cite relevant, accurate details and distinguish what the vault demonstrably does from outcomes the passage does not establish. For the open task, the proposed step must go beyond storing seeds, and the uncertainty must remain unresolved by the passage.