Behind the Beaver Dam

Find the main ideas, then write an objective summary.

7.RI.2.b "Provide an objective summary of the text."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one sentence in each paragraph that best carries its main idea. Circle one small detail in each paragraph that you could leave out of a short, fact-only summary.

What Beaver Ponds Change

1. At dusk, a beaver drags a branch across a narrow stream. Beavers use branches, mud, and stones to build dams that slow streams and create ponds near their lodges. In these lodges, they rest and raise their young. Deeper water can help protect a lodge entrance from some predators. A dam is not needed everywhere: on a deep lake or large river, a beaver may live without building a dam. Whether a dam is useful depends on the water already available.

2. Beaver ponds change nearby habitats and the movement of water. Slower water spreads across nearby land, creating wetlands where frogs, insects, fish, and birds can find food or shelter. The pond also traps sediment, the small bits of soil carried by moving water. Some water soaks into the ground, while other water continues downstream. Over time, a network of ponds can hold water during dry periods and slow some floodwater after heavy rain. The effects vary with the shape of the land and the amount of rainfall.

3. These changes can create problems for people and other wildlife. A pond may flood a road, field, or building, and a dam can block the movement of fish that need open streams. In some places, crews install devices that let water pass through a dam without draining the whole pond. Elsewhere, they protect important trees or remove a dam when flooding poses a serious risk. The goal is not always to stop beavers. It is to weigh the value of wetlands against the needs of nearby communities.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the central idea of the whole passage? State it in one objective sentence.

2. Summarize paragraph 1 in one sentence, leaving out the opening scene.

3. Which two effects in paragraph 2 are most important to include in a summary? Explain your choices in one sentence.

4. A reader writes, “Beavers are pests that ruin streams.” Replace that opinion with one objective sentence summarizing paragraph 3.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 60 to 80 word objective summary of the entire passage in your own words. Include its central idea, major effects on wildlife and water, and a problem people may need to manage; leave out opinions and minor details.

ANSWER KEY

Behind the Beaver Dam

GRADE 7 · 7.RI.2.b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one sentence in each paragraph that best carries its main idea. Circle one small detail in each paragraph that you could leave out of a short, fact-only summary. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the central idea of the whole passage? State it in one objective sentence.	**Beaver dams create ponds that change habitats and water flow, bringing benefits as well as problems that people may need to manage.**
2	Summarize paragraph 1 in one sentence, leaving out the opening scene.	**Beavers build dams that create ponds near their lodges, but they do not need dams in every setting.**
3	Which two effects in paragraph 2 are most important to include in a summary? Explain your choices in one sentence.	**Ponds create wetland habitat and can hold water during dry periods; these show their major effects on wildlife and water.**
4	A reader writes, "Beavers are pests that ruin streams." Replace that opinion with one objective sentence summarizing paragraph 3.	**Beaver ponds can flood roads or fields and block some fish, so people sometimes manage dams to reduce harm.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

When beavers dam streams, the resulting ponds can make their lodge entrances safer. These ponds create wetland habitat for other animals and catch sediment. Groups of ponds can also store water in dry weather and slow some floodwater. However, dams may flood roads or fields and keep some fish from moving freely. People sometimes manage the water or remove a dam to limit harm.

Accept other relevant effects from paragraph 2 if students explain why they belong in a summary. Objective summaries should cover the passage's main ideas without personal judgments or an extended list of minor details.