

Marks Shape Meaning

Read a model passage and track how punctuation shapes meaning.

8.10.D.vi "punctuation, including commas in nonrestrictive phrases and clauses, semicolons, colons, and parentheses; and"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each nonrestrictive phrase or clause. Circle every semicolon, colon, and pair of parentheses, then number the circles in order to notice what each mark does.

How Giant Sequoias Survive

- ① In California's Sierra Nevada, giant sequoias grow in scattered groves. These trees, which can live for more than 3,000 years, have thick, fibrous bark that helps protect them from fire. A mature sequoia can reach enormous size: its trunk may be wider than a city street. Fire is not simply a danger; it also opens cones and clears crowded plants. The trees depend on a cycle that may seem destructive at first to new visitors.
- ② Sequoia seeds need bare mineral soil to sprout, and low-intensity fires can create it. The cones, which may remain closed for years, release seeds when heat dries and opens their scales. Each tiny seed has a narrow wing (not a feather) that helps wind carry it. The seeds are light; however, only a small number land where moisture, sunlight, and soil conditions support growth. Many seedlings face another challenge: older trees cast deep shade across the forest floor.
- ③ People protect sequoia groves in several ways. Park crews remove some small trees near roads and buildings; this work lowers the chance that a severe fire will spread quickly. Scientists also study the trees' rings, which record patterns of wet and dry years. Their findings guide planning: managers can compare past droughts with current conditions. Visitors have a role, too (they should stay on marked trails), because trampling can damage young plants and loosen soil. Protecting a grove requires patience, research, and careful choices.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- 1** Copy the nonrestrictive clause that tells more about the trees in paragraph 1. What punctuation sets it apart from the rest of the sentence?

- 2** In paragraph 1, why is a semicolon used between “danger” and “it also opens cones”?

- 3** What information follows the colon in the sentence about seedlings facing “another challenge” in paragraph 2?

- 4** What words are inside the parentheses in paragraph 2, and why are they in parentheses?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly three sentences about an animal you know. Include a nonrestrictive phrase or clause set off by commas, a colon, a semicolon, and a pair of parentheses.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each nonrestrictive phrase or clause. Circle every semicolon, colon, and pair of parentheses, then number the circles in order to notice what each mark does. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Copy the nonrestrictive clause that tells more about the trees in paragraph 1. What punctuation sets it apart from the rest of the sentence?	which can live for more than 3,000 years; it is set apart by commas.
2	In paragraph 1, why is a semicolon used between "danger" and "it also opens cones"?	It joins two closely related independent clauses about fire.
3	What information follows the colon in the sentence about seedlings facing "another challenge" in paragraph 2?	The explanation of the challenge: older trees cast deep shade across the forest floor.
4	What words are inside the parentheses in paragraph 2, and why are they in parentheses?	not a feather; the words add a nonessential clarification about the seed's wing.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The peregrine falcon, a fast hunting bird, nests on tall cliffs. Its menu is simple: pigeons, shorebirds, and other small birds; it catches prey in the air. A falcon's dive (called a stoop) can exceed 200 miles per hour. Accept accurately identified punctuation and explanations that describe its job in the sentence. For Part 3, check that the response has exactly three sentences and uses each required punctuation feature correctly.