Falcon Comeback

Trace how evidence and events build an explanation.

7.RI.1.B "Analyze how the author unfolds a perspective or series of ideas or events in historical, scientific, or technical texts, including the order in which the points are made and how they are introduced and developed."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the first sentence of each paragraph and number the underlined sentences 1, 2, and 3. Circle words or phrases that signal a shift to a new point, so you can trace how the author builds the explanation.

How Peregrines Returned

(1) By the 1960s, peregrine falcons had nearly disappeared from much of the eastern United States. The birds ate smaller animals that had absorbed DDT, a pesticide used on crops. As DDT built up in the falcons' bodies, it caused many females to lay eggs with thin shells. The shells broke during incubation, so few chicks survived. Scientists first described this crisis by connecting a visible result, empty nests, to a hidden cause, pesticide buildup in the food chain.

(2) Researchers then tested whether DDT was truly responsible. They compared eggs collected before widespread DDT use with eggs from the years when the pesticide was common. The later eggshells were much thinner. Other studies showed that DDT could move from insects to fish, birds, and finally falcons. By presenting the comparisons and then the food-chain evidence, the account develops the scientists' explanation instead of asking readers to accept it without proof. This order makes each new point support the one before it.

(3) In 1972, the United States banned most uses of DDT, although the chemical continued to be used in some countries. Wildlife workers also raised peregrine chicks in captivity and released them into places where the birds had vanished. The final part of the account shifts from explaining the decline to showing responses and results. Over time, peregrine populations recovered in many eastern areas. In 1999, the species was removed from the U.S. endangered species list, but scientists still monitor threats to its habitat and food.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the first paragraph introduce the author's explanation for the peregrines' decline?

2. What evidence does the author present after comparing eggs from different years, and how does that evidence develop the explanation?

3. Why does the author tell about the DDT ban before describing captive breeding and releases?

4. How does the focus of the final paragraph differ from the focus of the first two paragraphs?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence analysis of how the author unfolds the idea of peregrine falcon recovery. Explain what each paragraph adds and why the author's order helps readers understand the topic.

ANSWER KEY # Falcon Comeback

GRADE 7 · 7.RI.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the first sentence of each paragraph and number the underlined sentences 1, 2, and 3. Circle words or phrases that signal a shift to a new point, so you can trace how the author builds the explanation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the first paragraph introduce the author's explanation for the peregrines' decline?	**It begins with the visible problem, disappearing falcons and empty nests, then connects it to the hidden cause of DDT building up in the food chain.**
2	What evidence does the author present after comparing eggs from different years, and how does that evidence develop the explanation?	**The author explains that DDT moved through insects, fish, birds, and falcons. This supports the idea that the pesticide could reach falcons and cause thin eggshells.**
3	Why does the author tell about the DDT ban before describing captive breeding and releases?	**The order shows two responses to the decline, first reducing a major cause and then helping rebuild falcon populations.**
4	How does the focus of the final paragraph differ from the focus of the first two paragraphs?	**The first two paragraphs explain and support the cause of the decline. The final paragraph shifts to actions taken, population recovery, and continuing threats.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The author begins by showing that peregrine falcons were disappearing and connects the problem to DDT. Next, the author adds egg comparisons and food-chain evidence to prove the connection. The final paragraph moves to the ban on DDT, captive breeding, and the falcons' recovery. This order helps readers understand the problem and its proof before learning how people responded.

Accept responses that identify the passage's progression from problem and cause, to evidence, to responses and results. Students should explain how the order helps build understanding, not merely list facts from the passage.