Clockwork Connections

Trace an author's claim, evidence, and order of ideas.

7.RI.1 "Key Ideas and Confirming Details Create a main idea statement and provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop through the text. Analyze how the author unfolds a perspective or series of ideas or events in historical..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that states the author's main claim. Circle details that support the claim, and number the three main stages of the explanation in order.

When Railroads Changed Time

1 Before the 1880s, many American towns set clocks by the sun's position overhead. Noon in one town could arrive several minutes before noon in a town to the west. This system worked for local routines, but it created trouble for railroads. A train crossing several towns could meet different clock readings during one trip. Passengers and workers had to compare local times with railroad schedules, making departures and connections harder to coordinate and plan travel.

2 On November 18, 1883, major U.S. railroads adopted a system of four time zones, often called Standard Time. The change did not erase every local clock at once, but railroads could print schedules using the same time within each zone. For example, dispatchers on a shared stretch of track could use one agreed-upon time when deciding when trains should enter it. A traveler changing trains could also read timetables that used a predictable system instead of converting each town's local time.

3 Railroad time soon influenced life beyond the tracks. Some cities and businesses gradually reset their clocks, although local time remained in use in places for years. In 1918, the U.S. government made time zones part of federal law through the Standard Time Act. At one busy station, a large clock stood above the ticket windows, where travelers often glanced up before boarding. This history shows how a railroad need helped create a broader national system.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What is the author's main claim about railroads and time zones?

2. How does the author develop the idea from the first paragraph to the last paragraph?

3. Which detail is least relevant to proving the author's main claim? Explain why.

4. Write an accurate two-sentence summary of the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence paragraph explaining whether the author's evidence supports the idea that railroads helped create a broader national time system. Use two relevant details, name one less relevant detail, and explain how the author's order strengthens or weakens the argument.

ANSWER KEY

Clockwork Connections

GRADE 7 · 7.RI.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that states the author's main claim. Circle details that support the claim, and number the three main stages of the explanation in order. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What is the author's main claim about railroads and time zones?	**Railroad needs for coordinated schedules helped create a broader national system of time zones.**
2	How does the author develop the idea from the first paragraph to the last paragraph?	**The author begins with problems caused by local time, explains the railroads' four-zone solution and its benefits, then describes the system's wider influence and federal recognition.**
3	Which detail is least relevant to proving the author's main claim? Explain why.	**The detail about the large station clock is least relevant because it shows what travelers did, but it does not show that time zones improved railroad coordination or became a national system.**
4	Write an accurate two-sentence summary of the passage.	**Before Standard Time, different local clock readings made railroad schedules and connections difficult to coordinate. In 1883, major railroads adopted four time zones, and the system later spread beyond railroads as cities, businesses, and federal law recognized it.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The evidence supports the author's idea that railroad needs helped create a broader national time system. The four-zone plan gave dispatchers on shared track an agreed-upon time, and the 1918 law shows that time zones later became part of federal law. The station clock is less relevant because it shows a traveler's action but does not demonstrate coordination or national adoption. By beginning with the local-time problem and then moving to the railroad solution and its wider effects, the author makes the argument easy to follow.

Accept main-idea statements that connect railroad coordination needs to the spread of a national time system. For the open response, accept different relevant evidence if the student accurately explains its connection to the claim and identifies a weakly relevant detail.