

# Reading—Sample Content

## Levels 12 and 13

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Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

### A Towering Tree

The largest living thing on Earth is the General Sherman, a giant sequoia tree. Its trunk weighs almost three million pounds. That is as heavy as 5 whales! Another giant sequoia, called the President, is one of the oldest trees at 3,200 years. How do giant sequoias grow so large and live so long?

This passage and corresponding items are read independently by the student.

### A Helpful Covering

Giant sequoias have a special bark that protects their trunks. It is full of tannic acid. The acid stops certain diseases from hurting the trees. Plus, harmful bugs dislike its bitter taste. So they do not bore into the trees. Finally, the acid does not easily burn. As a result, the trees survive forest fires. The bark is also quite thick. Its woody threads weave together around pockets of air. This gives the bark a sponge layer. If a falling branch hits a giant sequoia, the sponge layer absorbs the blow. Also, the sponge layer guards the tree from hot or cold temperatures.

### Up, Up, Up

A young giant sequoia has a vast net of roots. They spread out from the tree in a wide circle. The roots are fairly close to the ground's surface. They quickly draw in water when it rains.

The giant sequoia grows steadily. In one year, a young tree sprouts up two feet and its trunk becomes an inch wider. Its branches form a cone shape, and bright green needles fill them. Each year, the giant sequoia gets bigger. In fact, the oldest trees grow the most!



## Cones

When giant sequoias mature, they produce cones. Certain squirrels and insects feast on them. This helps spread the seeds hidden inside the cones.

Most often, however, forest fires do the job. Their heat causes the cones to open. Then the seeds fall on the freshly burned soil. There are no other plants to fight with them for sun and water. So the giant sequoias flourish.

Today, giant sequoias grow on the mountains in California. National parks protect them. People are welcome to visit and view these wonders of nature.

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**What does the picture most help the reader understand?**

- ☐ why giant sequoias are so strong
- ☐ where giant sequoias usually grow
- ☐ what the bark of giant sequoias looks like
- ☒ how tall giant sequoias are compared to people

This item assesses:

R.5.4 – Demonstrate awareness of techniques that enhance comprehension, such as using existing knowledge, summarizing content, comparing information across texts, using graphics and text structure, and formulating questions that deepen understanding: graphic strategies.

Thinking Skill – Gather Information—Observe: obtain information through observation

3.RI.7 – Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

**Based on the information in the passage, which two statements explain how giant sequoias protect themselves?**

- ☐ The trees grow faster and wider as they age.
- ☐ The trees produce cones, which some animals and insects eat.
- ☒ The bark of the trees has an acid that keeps bugs away and stops the trees from burning.
- ☐ The roots of the trees are close to the surface and spread out from the trees in a big circle.
- ☒ The bark of the trees has a layer that acts like a sponge and keeps the trees safe from hot and cold temperatures.

This item assesses:

R.5.10 – Demonstrate awareness of techniques that enhance comprehension, such as using existing knowledge, summarizing content, comparing information across texts, using graphics and text structure, and formulating questions that deepen understanding: reading strategies.

Thinking Skill – Organize Information—Compare: note similarities and differences

3.RI.3 – Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

**What does the author of the passage most likely think about giant sequoias?**

- ☒ Giant sequoias are amazing.
- ☐ Giant sequoias are difficult to grow.
- ☐ Giant sequoias are the cause of many problems.
- ☐ Giant sequoias are similar to other types of trees.

This item assesses:

R.4.5 – Demonstrate critical understanding by making predictions; distinguishing between fact and opinion, and reality and fantasy; transferring ideas to other situations; and judging author purpose, point of view, and effectiveness: author point of view/bias.

Thinking Skill – Generate Ideas—Infer: reason beyond available information to fill in gaps

3.RI.6 – Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.

## Read the sentences from the passage.

Most often, however, forest fires do the job. Their heat causes the cones to open. Then the seeds fall on the freshly burned soil. There are no other plants to fight with them for sun or water. So the giant sequoias flourish.

## How do the sentences connect to the rest of the passage?

- ☒ They explain how fires can help giant sequoias.
- ☐ They show why giant sequoias grow in the mountains.
- ☐ They explain how giant sequoias get water.
- ☐ They show what causes fires near giant sequoias.

This item assesses:

R.4.9 – Demonstrate critical understanding by making predictions; distinguishing between fact and opinion, and reality and fantasy; transferring ideas to other situations; and judging author purpose, point of view, and effectiveness: extend an apply meaning.

Thinking Skill – Synthesize Information—Integrate: connect and combine elements into a new whole

3.RI.8 – Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence).

The SAY text is read aloud to the student. Orally administered items may be repeated if needed.

**SAY** Find the word that has the same vowel sound as “five . . . five.” Mark your answer.

- ☐ fix
- ☒ wise
- ☐ lift

This item assesses:

R.6.3 – Demonstrate knowledge of sound/symbol and structural relationships in letters, words, and signs: word analysis.

Thinking Skill – Organize Information—Compare: note similarities and differences

2.RF.3a – Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words.