Summarizing worksheet

4th grade reading · Informational Text · RI.4.2

Name _____ Date _____

For grown-ups: 9 questions from our summarizing practice, easier ones first. Read a question aloud if your child wants that, then check together with the answer key on page 3. Read the passage before the questions that go with it. Circle the letter of the best answer, or the right word where there are no letters. Number the steps 1, 2, 3 in the order they happen.

Why Leaves Change Color

Every autumn, the green leaves of many trees turn yellow, orange, and red. The colors seem to appear from nowhere. But the yellow and orange were there all along.

Leaves are green because of a chemical called chlorophyll. Chlorophyll captures sunlight and helps the tree make food. There is so much chlorophyll in a summer leaf that it hides the other colors.

As days grow shorter and cooler in autumn, the tree gets ready for winter. It stops making chlorophyll, and the green fades away. Now the yellow and orange pigments, which were hidden underneath, finally show through.

Red is different. Some trees make a new red pigment in the fall when bright, sunny days are followed by cool nights. That is why the reddest autumns come after a certain kind of weather.

Eventually the tree seals off each leaf, and it falls to the ground. The tree rests through winter and grows fresh green leaves in spring.

1. **Which is the best summary of this passage?**
   - **A.** Red leaves are the prettiest, and the best autumns come after sunny days and cool nights when trees make the most red.
   - **B.** In autumn trees seal off their leaves, the leaves fall to the ground, and the trees rest all winter before growing new ones.
   - **C.** Leaves are green in summer because of chlorophyll, which captures sunlight and helps the tree make its food.
   - **D.** Leaves change color in fall because trees stop making green chlorophyll, revealing hidden yellows and oranges, while some make new red pigment.

2. **What does chlorophyll do?**
   - **A.** Keeps the tree warm in winter
   - **B.** Turns leaves red
   - **C.** Captures sunlight to help the tree make food
   - **D.** Makes the leaves fall in autumn

3. **Which detail is NOT important enough for a summary?**
   - **A.** Trees stop making chlorophyll in autumn
   - **B.** Red comes from a new pigment
   - **C.** The colors seem to appear from nowhere
   - **D.** Chlorophyll hides other colors

4. **True or false: A good summary includes every detail from the text.**

   ○ **True** ○ **False**

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4th grade reading · questions, continued

5. **Which is the best summary of this paragraph?**

> Saturn's rings look solid from far away, but they are actually made of billions of pieces of ice and rock. Some pieces are as small as grains of sand. Others are as big as houses. The rings stretch out for thousands of miles but are mostly less than a mile thick.

A. Some pieces of Saturn's rings are as small as grains of sand, and others are as big as houses.
B. Saturn is a planet with rings that stretch out for thousands of miles around it.
C. Saturn's rings are made of countless pieces of ice and rock of many sizes, and they are very wide but very thin.
D. Saturn's rings are one thin, solid sheet of ice that stretches for thousands of miles.

6. **Which sentence should NOT be in a summary of this paragraph?**

> The school garden club had a problem: rabbits were eating the lettuce. The students tried a scarecrow, but the rabbits ignored it. Then they built a low wire fence. The lettuce has been safe ever since.

A. A scarecrow did not work.
B. The scarecrow wore an old red hat.
C. Rabbits were eating the garden club's lettuce.
D. The students built a fence that solved the problem.

7. **True or false: A summary should be written in your own words.**

○ **True** ○ **False**

8. **Put the sentences of this summary in the right order.**

☐ Finally, the glass is cooled slowly so it does not crack.
☐ Glass starts as sand mixed with a few other minerals.
☐ Then the melted glass is shaped by blowing, molding, or rolling.
☐ The mixture is heated in a furnace until it melts.

9. **Which summary is too broad?**

> Chameleons change color mainly to communicate and control their temperature, not to hide. A dark chameleon absorbs more heat on a cold morning. Bright colors can warn rivals or attract mates.

A. Chameleons change color mostly to communicate and manage heat, not to camouflage.
B. Chameleons are interesting animals.
C. Color changes help chameleons stay warm and send signals to other chameleons.
D. Chameleons change color for temperature and communication rather than hiding.

Answer key: Summarizing

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1. **D. Leaves change color in fall because trees stop making green chlorophyll, revealing hidden yellows and oranges, while some make new red pigment.**
   This covers the main idea and the key reasons for the color change.
2. **C. Captures sunlight to help the tree make food**
   The passage says chlorophyll captures sunlight and helps the tree make food.
3. **C. The colors seem to appear from nowhere**
   That sentence is an opening hook, not a key fact.
4. **False**
   A summary is short. It includes only the main idea and the most important details.
5. **C. Saturn's rings are made of countless pieces of ice and rock of many sizes, and they are very wide but very thin.**
   This covers what the rings are made of and their shape, the two main ideas.
6. **B. The scarecrow wore an old red hat.**
   The scarecrow's hat is a tiny detail that does not help explain the problem or solution.
7. **True**
   A summary retells the main ideas in your own words instead of copying sentences.
8. **Top to bottom: 4, 1, 3, 2**
   The steps go from raw sand, to melting, to shaping, to cooling.
9. **B. Chameleons are interesting animals.**
   "Interesting animals" is too general. It does not tell what the paragraph is actually about.