Cause and Effect

Grade 3 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

Dust Storms on the Plains

In the early 1900s, many families moved to the Great Plains. This flat land stretches across the middle of the United States. Thick prairie grass had covered it for thousands of years. The grass had long, tangled roots. Those roots held the soil in place, even in strong winds.

The new farmers wanted to grow wheat. So they plowed up huge areas of grass. For a while, rain fell often, and the wheat grew well. Wheat prices were high, so farmers plowed even more land. New tractors let them plow faster than ever.

Then, in the early 1930s, the rain stopped. Year after year, very little fell. The wheat dried up. Farmers watched the sky, hoping for clouds. Without grass roots to hold it, the dry soil turned to dust.

The plains are a windy place. Strong winds lifted the loose dust high into the sky. Giant dust clouds rolled across the land. Some were so thick that day looked like night. Dust even drifted all the way to cities on the East Coast. People called the region the Dust Bowl.

The dust caused many problems. It piled up against houses and fences. It got into food, water, and people's lungs. Many farm families could not grow crops, so they had no money. Thousands packed up and moved west to look for work.

Government leaders studied the problem. They learned that bare soil blows away easily. As a result, they taught farmers new ways to care for the land. Farmers planted rows of trees to slow the wind. They plowed in curves that followed the shape of the hills. They let some fields rest under grass.

These changes helped. When the rain finally returned, the soil stayed in place better. Farmers on the plains still use many of these ideas today. The Dust Bowl taught people that caring for soil protects it from wind and dry weather.

1. Why did the soil stay in place before the farmers came?
   - Rain fell almost every day.
   - The wind was much weaker then.
   - Rows of trees blocked the wind.
   - Grass roots held it down.

2. Why did farmers plow even more land?
   - The rain had stopped.
   - The grass was drying up.
   - Leaders told them to.
   - Wheat prices were high.

3. What made the dry soil turn to dust?
   - Rows of trees used up all the water.
   - No rain and no grass roots to hold it.
   - New tractors crushed the soil into powder.
   - Strong winds blew the wheat plants away.

4. What was one effect of the strong winds on the loose dust?
   - The rain returned to the plains.
   - Wheat grew well for a few years.
   - Farmers planted rows of trees.
   - Dust clouds made day look like night.

5. Why did many farm families move west?
   They wanted to buy new tractors in the west.
   Leaders asked them to let their fields rest.
   Prices for wheat were too high on the plains.
   They could not grow crops, so they had no money.

6. Which list shows the causes in the right order?
   Grass is plowed, soil blows away, rain stops.
   Grass is plowed, rain stops, soil blows away.
   Soil blows away, grass is plowed, rain stops.
   Rain stops, grass is plowed, soil blows away.

7. What did leaders learn that led them to teach new ways of farming?
   Tractors plow too slowly.
   Wheat needs a lot of rain.
   Trees make more rain fall.
   Bare soil blows away easily.

8. Why did farmers plant rows of trees?
   to sell the wood to slow the wind to bring more rain to shade the wheat

9. What does "bare" mean in "bare soil blows away easily"?
   very wet and muddy planted with wheat not covered by plants full of large rocks

10. What happened as a result of the new farming ways?
    Farmers stopped growing wheat.
    The rain came back right away.
    The soil stayed in place better.
    The plains were no longer windy.

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Answer Key - Grade 3 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

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