Cause and Effect in Texts

Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

The Box That Changed the World

Look around your home. Your sneakers, your toys and your backpack probably traveled thousands of miles to reach you. Most of them made the trip inside a plain metal box called a shipping container. This simple box changed how the whole world trades.

Before the 1950s, loading a ship was slow, hard work. Goods arrived at the docks in sacks, barrels, crates and bundles of every size. Teams of dockworkers carried each item on board and fit it into the ship's hold like pieces of a puzzle. Loading a single ship could take a week or more. Ships often spent more time tied up at the dock than sailing across the sea. Because of all this work, shipping was expensive. Sometimes it cost more to move a product than to make it.

Malcom McLean, a trucking company owner from North Carolina, thought there had to be a better way. He watched his trucks wait for hours at crowded docks. Why, he wondered, couldn't the whole trailer be lifted onto the ship? In 1956, McLean tested his idea. A ship called the Ideal X carried 58 metal containers from Newark, New Jersey, to Houston, Texas. At the end of the trip, cranes lifted the boxes straight onto waiting trucks.

The results were dramatic. Before containers, loading cargo cost about $5.86 per ton. McLean's method cost about 16 cents per ton. Ships that once waited a week could now be loaded in less than a day. Since the boxes were sealed, fewer goods were lost or broken along the way.

These savings set off a chain of changes. First, because ships spent less time at the docks, companies built bigger ships to carry even more containers. Today's largest ships hold more than 20,000. Next, ports had to change. Old, narrow docks in city centers had no room for giant cranes and stacks of boxes. New ports grew in open areas where land was cheaper. Many dockworkers lost their jobs, because cranes now did the work of dozens of people.

Shipping became so cheap that companies could make products wherever costs were lowest. A shirt might be designed in one country, sewn in another and sold in a third. As a result, stores filled with a greater variety of goods at lower prices.

Not every effect has been positive. Huge ships burn large amounts of fuel and pollute the air and water. Also, when one link in the chain breaks, the problems spread quickly. In 2021, a giant container ship got stuck sideways in the Suez Canal for six days. Hundreds of ships waited in line, and stores around the world felt the delay for months.

McLean did not invent a new machine. He simply found a better way to use a box. That small idea reshaped ports, jobs and the price of nearly everything we buy.

1. What problem led McLean to his idea?
   - He saw his trucks waiting for hours at crowded docks.
   - He saw that ships were too small to cross the sea.
   - He saw cranes breaking goods during loading.
   - He saw that big ports had no room for trucks.

2. Why was shipping so expensive before containers?
   - Cranes were very costly to run at every dock.
   - Workers loaded each item by hand, which took days.
   - Each container had to be sealed before the trip.
   - Ships had to sail all the way around the world.

3. Which effect of containers then caused companies to build bigger ships?
   New ports grew where land was cheaper.
   Stores filled with more kinds of goods.
   Ships spent much less time at the docks.
   Dockworkers lost their jobs to cranes.

4. Why did new ports grow outside city centers?
   Old city docks had no room for cranes and stacks of boxes.
   City docks were too far away from the truck routes.
   Ships could no longer fit through the city canals.
   Dockworkers refused to work in the crowded cities.

5. Which chain of events is described in the text?
   Ships got bigger, so ports moved into city centers, so dockworkers found many more jobs at the docks.
   Shipping got cheaper, so companies made goods where costs were lowest, so stores had more goods at lower prices.
   Goods were lost at sea, so boxes were sealed, so fewer and smaller ships were built each year.
   Prices rose, so companies built new factories at home, so ships waited longer at the docks.

6. How did the use of cranes affect dockworkers?
   They earned more money because ships were bigger.
   They had to load each container by hand.
   Many lost their jobs because cranes did their work.
   They moved to new ports with cheaper land.

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Answer Key - Grade 5 Reading Worksheet - Challenge Me

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