Use Evidence in Informational Text

Grade 5 Reading Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

Children Who Created a Language

Before the late 1970s, deaf children in Nicaragua had few chances to meet one another. Most lived at home with hearing families. Each child used a small set of home signs, simple gestures that only their own family understood. There was no shared sign language in the country.

That changed when schools for deaf children opened in the capital city, Managua. By the early 1980s, hundreds of deaf students were attending. The teachers tried to teach them to read lips and speak Spanish. That approach mostly failed. Few children learned to understand spoken words this way. Many students arrived knowing only the home signs they had used with their families.

Something remarkable was happening outside the classroom, though. On the school buses and in the schoolyard, the children began signing to one another. They combined their home signs and invented new ones. At first, the system was simple. Children could share basic ideas, but it was hard to describe complicated events.

Then younger children arrived at the schools. They learned the signs from older students, but they did not simply copy them. Without anyone teaching them to, they made the signing faster, more regular, and more detailed. For example, they developed ways to show where people were in a story and who was doing what to whom. Older signers often could not match the younger children's skill.

The teachers did not understand the signs. In 1986, school leaders invited an American sign language expert, Judy Kegl, to help. She soon realized the children were not just using a set of gestures. They had built a full language, with its own grammar. She and other researchers began recording the signs and collecting them into a dictionary. Today it is called Nicaraguan Sign Language, and thousands of people use it.

Scientists around the world have studied this language. It is one of the only times researchers have been able to watch a new language being born. The research suggests that children's brains are especially ready to build language. When a group of children has no language to learn, they may create one together. Studying it has helped scientists learn how all languages may grow and change.

1. Which sentence shows that the children did not share a language before the schools opened?
   - The teachers did not understand the signs.
   - Most lived at home with hearing families.
   - There was no shared sign language in the country.
   - By the early 1980s, hundreds of deaf students were attending.

2. Which sentence supports the statement that the teachers' approach did not work well?
   - They combined their home signs and invented new ones.
   - Few children learned to understand spoken words this way.
   - Then younger children arrived at the schools.
   - The teachers tried to teach them to read lips and speak Spanish.

3. According to the text, where did the children begin signing to each other?
   at home with their hearing families
   on the school buses and in the schoolyard
   in meetings led by Judy Kegl
   in their classrooms during lessons

4. What can you infer about the first version of the children's signing?
   It worked for simple ideas but not for detailed stories.
   It was used only by the youngest students at the schools.
   It was taught to the children by their teachers.
   It was already a full language with grammar.

5. Which sentence best supports the inference that younger children improved the language on their own?
   Without anyone teaching them to, they made the signing faster, more regular, and more detailed.
   They learned the signs from older students.
   The teachers did not understand the signs.
   At first, the system was simple.

6. Which detail shows that the language grew more detailed?
   The teachers tried to teach them to read lips and speak Spanish.
   They found ways to show where people were in a story.
   Most lived at home with hearing families.
   Children could share basic ideas.

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Answer Key - Grade 5 Reading Worksheet

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