Main Idea and Summary

Grade 5 Reading Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Circle the answer.

READ THIS FIRST

The Stepwells of India

In the dry lands of western India, rain does not fall evenly through the year. For a few months, monsoon storms pour down. For the rest of the year, the sky stays clear and the ground bakes. For more than a thousand years, people solved this problem by digging deep into the earth. They built stepwells.

A stepwell is a well with a giant staircase leading down to the water. Workers dug by hand through soil and rock to build them. At the bottom lies a pool fed by water from under the ground. During the rainy season, the water rises close to the top steps. As the dry months pass, the water level drops, and people simply walk farther down. Some stepwells reach seven or more stories below the ground. The deep stone walls keep the water cool and shaded, so less of it dries up in the heat.

Stepwells were also much more than places to collect water. Because the air near the bottom was cooler, people gathered there to rest on hot afternoons. Travelers stopped to drink and wash. Women met friends while they filled their pots. Some stepwells even had stone balconies along their walls, where families could sit in the shade. Many stepwells became centers of village life, where news and stories were shared.

Some stepwells are works of art as well. Rani ki Vav, in the state of Gujarat, was built nearly a thousand years ago in memory of a king. Its walls hold hundreds of carved stone figures of gods, dancers, and animals. Chand Baori, in Rajasthan, has about 3,500 narrow steps arranged in zigzag patterns on three sides. From the top, the steps look like a puzzle that folds down into the earth.

In the 1800s and 1900s, many stepwells were forgotten. Pipes and taps brought water into homes, and some wells filled with trash. Recently, though, people have begun cleaning and repairing them. Rani ki Vav is now a World Heritage Site, and visitors from around the world come to see its carvings. Some towns are even using old stepwells to store rainwater again, as their ancestors once did.

1. Which sentence best states the main ideas of the text?

   Pipes and taps now bring water straight into most homes in India's towns and villages.

   Chand Baori has about 3,500 narrow steps in zigzag patterns.

   Stepwells stored water for dry months and also served as meeting places and art.

   Monsoon storms pour heavy rain on western India for a few months.

2. Which detail supports the idea that stepwells were designed for the dry season?

Travelers stopped at stepwells to drink and wash.

Some old wells filled up with trash.

As the water level drops, people walk farther down.

Rani ki Vav holds hundreds of carved figures.

3. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?

Women carried water pots home every day.

Travelers needed plenty of water for their long journeys across the land.

Stepwells were important meeting places in village life.

Stepwells kept water cool so it would not dry up.

4. Which detail supports the idea that some stepwells are works of art?

Rani ki Vav's walls hold hundreds of carved figures.

Some towns use stepwells to store rain again.

The water rises near the top in the rainy season.

Stone walls keep the water cool and shaded.

5. Why were many stepwells forgotten?

Kings ordered the old wells to be closed.

Pipes and taps brought water into homes.

The steps became too steep for travelers.

The monsoon rains stopped falling in India.

6. Which detail is too minor to include in a summary?

People are now repairing old stepwells.

Stepwells held water for the long dry season.

Stepwells became centers of village life.

From the top, Chand Baori looks like a puzzle.

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Answer Key - Grade 5 Reading Worksheet

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