Informative and Explanatory Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Score: _____ / 10

Quick Review

A Grade 7 informative piece TEACHES the reader and (1) introduces the topic with a CLEAR THESIS, (2) ORGANIZES ideas using strategies such as classification, comparison, or cause/effect, (3) develops the topic with CONCRETE DETAILS, FACTS, DEFINITIONS, QUOTATIONS, and EXAMPLES, (4) uses APPROPRIATE TRANSITIONS to clarify the relationships among ideas, (5) employs PRECISE, DOMAIN-SPECIFIC vocabulary, and (6) ends with a conclusion that follows from the explanation.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

Student draft - How Earthquakes Send Two Kinds of Waves Through the Ground

Most people picture an earthquake as a single shake, but an earthquake actually sends out at least TWO different kinds of waves at different speeds. Understanding the difference between these waves - called P-waves and S-waves - is the reason seismologists can warn cities seconds before the strongest shaking arrives.

P-waves, or PRIMARY waves, are the fastest seismic waves. They travel through rock at about 5 to 8 kilometers per second by pushing and pulling the rock in the same direction the wave is moving - similar to the way a spring stretches and compresses when you tap one end. Because P-waves are fast, they always reach a recording station first. However, they carry relatively little destructive energy, so people on the surface often feel only a small jolt when P-waves arrive.

S-waves, or SECONDARY waves, are slower. They travel at about 3 to 4 kilometers per second and move the rock SIDE TO SIDE, perpendicular to the wave's direction of travel. This sideways motion is what cracks walls and topples chimneys. S-waves cannot pass through liquids, which is one of the ways scientists learned that Earth's outer core is liquid - the S-waves simply stop when they hit it.

Because P-waves outrun S-waves, the gap between the two is the basis of every modern earthquake early-warning system. When a sensor near the epicenter records the first P-wave, software can estimate the location and strength of the quake and send an alert before the slower, more destructive S-waves arrive. In Japan, this kind of system can give a downtown skyscraper 10 to 30 seconds of warning - enough time to stop trains, halt surgeries, and prompt students to take cover.

Two waves, two speeds, two effects. The next time you read that a city felt a small jolt followed seconds later by violent shaking, you'll know what arrived first and why the second arrival did most of the damage.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Read the student draft. Answer the questions about structure, organization, evidence, vocabulary, and revision.

1. Which sentence is the BEST THESIS for this informative piece?

A. I have always thought earthquakes are completely terrifying and unfair.

B. Most people picture an earthquake as a single shake, but an earthquake actually sends out at least TWO different kinds of waves at different speeds.

C. Did you know the largest earthquake ever recorded was in 1960?

D. There are many earthquakes around the world, and some of them are big.

2. How does the writer ORGANIZE the body of this piece (paragraphs 2 and 3)?

A. By telling a personal story from start to finish.

B. By CLASSIFYING and CONTRASTING two kinds of seismic waves (P-waves vs. S-waves).

C. By time order, from morning to evening.

D. By listing every kind of natural disaster in alphabetical order.

3. Which sentence from the draft is a DEFINITION (a term + what it means)?

A. P-waves are the fastest seismic waves.

B. S-waves cannot pass through liquids.

C. P-waves, or PRIMARY waves, are the fastest seismic waves.

D. Japan can give a downtown skyscraper 10 to 30 seconds of warning.

4. Which transition would BEST CONNECT paragraph 2 (P-waves) to paragraph 3 (S-waves)?

A. For instance,

B. By the way,

C. S-waves, or SECONDARY waves, are slower.

D. In summary,

5. The writer wants to add a CONCRETE DETAIL to paragraph 4 about Japan's early-warning system. Which sentence is BEST?

A. Japan really cares a lot about earthquakes and is just amazing at them.

B. During the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, Japan's nationwide early-warning system delivered alerts to over 50 million people up to 60 seconds before the strongest shaking reached Tokyo.

C. Earthquakes are scary and you should think about them often.

D. There are many things about Japan that are very interesting to people.

6. Which is the BEST DOMAIN-SPECIFIC vocabulary choice for the underlined word in *A scientist who studies earthquakes is called a scientist.*?

A. a scientist person

B. a seismologist

C. an earthquake-feeler

D. a person who looks at the ground

7. Which sentence does NOT belong in this informative piece because it is OPINION rather than fact?

A. P-waves push and pull the rock in the same direction the wave is moving.

B. S-waves cannot pass through liquids.

C. Honestly, P-waves are obviously the coolest waves and everyone should agree.

D. Japan's early-warning system can give Tokyo 10 to 30 seconds of warning.

8. Which sentence would be the STRONGEST CONCLUSION for this informative piece?

A. P-waves are very fast and S-waves are slower than P-waves are.

B. Did you know the first seismograph was invented in China in 132 CE?

C. Two waves, two speeds, two effects - the next time you read about an earthquake, you'll know what arrived first and why the second arrival did most of the damage.

D. I really, really love earthquakes more than other types of disasters.

9. Read these two transition options. Which BEST signals CAUSE-AND-EFFECT between the speed gap and the warning system?

A. *However,* P-waves outrun S-waves, so warning systems use the gap.

B. *Because* P-waves outrun S-waves, the gap between the two is the basis of every modern earthquake early-warning system.

C. *By the way,* P-waves outrun S-waves and warning systems use the gap.

D. *For example,* P-waves outrun S-waves and warning systems use the gap.

10. A peer wants to add this sentence to paragraph 3: *I once saw a really wild movie where the ground cracked open in like 30 seconds.* Why does this NOT fit the piece?

A. The sentence is too long for paragraph 3.

B. Informative writing requires sources and facts; an unverified movie image is a PERSONAL EXAMPLE that doesn't explain how S-waves cause damage.

C. The sentence does not mention any rocks.

D. The writer should never use the word *I*.

Answer Keys

1	A	**B**	C	D	6	A	**B**	C	D
2	A	**B**	C	D	7	A	B	**C**	D
3	A	B	**C**	D	8	A	B	**C**	D
4	A	B	**C**	D	9	A	**B**	C	D
5	A	**B**	C	D	10	A	**B**	C	D

Explanations

1. B	B names the SUBJECT (earthquakes) and the FOCUS (TWO different kinds of waves at different speeds) - the exact thesis the piece will develop. A is opinion. C is an off-topic fact. D is too broad.
2. B	Paragraphs 2 and 3 each name a WAVE TYPE and describe its speed, motion, and effect - classic classification/contrast structure. A is wrong (no narrative). C is wrong (no time order). D is wrong (only seismic waves appear).
3. C	C introduces the term *P-waves*, glosses it with the full name *primary waves*, and gives a brief meaning (the fastest seismic waves) - the textbook definition pattern. A states a feature but doesn't gloss the term. B is a property. D is an application.
4. C	Effective informative transitions move the reader from one classified item to its counterpart. C names the next type AND signals contrast with the previous one (*slower*). *For instance* introduces an example. *By the way* signals an aside. *In summary* belongs at the close.
5. B	B adds a SPECIFIC, measurable, on-topic detail (named 2011 quake, 50 million people, up to 60 seconds) that strengthens the paragraph's point about Japan's system. A is vague praise. C is opinion. D is off-topic filler.
6. B	B uses the precise technical term (*seismologist*) - exactly right for an informative piece on earthquake science. A repeats the vague word. C is an invented compound. D is a description, not a name.
7. C	C uses judgment words (*honestly, obviously, coolest, everyone should agree*) and takes a side - that's opinion, not information. A, B, and D are factual statements consistent with an informative piece.
8. C	C echoes the thesis pattern (TWO waves, TWO speeds, TWO effects), ties together the article's main point, and gives the reader a real-world use - exactly what an informative conclusion does. A is mere repetition. B is an off-topic new fact. D is unrelated opinion.
9. B	*Because* directly signals CAUSE (speed gap) and EFFECT (warning systems use it) - exactly the relationship the paragraph describes. *However* signals contrast. *By the way* signals an aside. *For example* introduces an example, not a cause.
10. B	Informative writing is built from concrete details, facts, and credible sources. A vague movie memory is anecdotal and adds no real explanatory power. A is irrelevant. C is overly narrow. D is a writing myth - first person can appear in informative texts when relevant.

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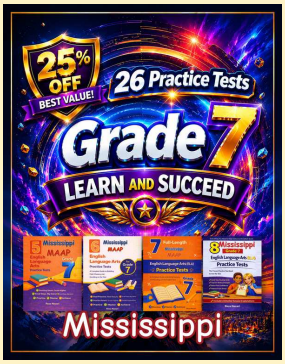

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