PREPARING FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS

Writing Skills

Research Report

Directions: Read this passage from a research report. Then, answer each question that follows.

(1) Some parasites make their hosts behave strangely. (2) A kind of wasp can make a spider build a home for its larva. (3) According to *Nature* magazine,[1] the wasp stings the spider to paralyze it and then lays an egg on the spider's abdomen. (4) After the larva hatches, it feeds on the living spider's blood. (5) Then, the larva injects a chemical into the spider that makes the spider spin a special kind of web, one very different from its usual web. (6) In a BBC News Online article,[2] Dr. William Eberhard, a scientist who studies these insects, calls it "the ideal web from the wasp-larva point of view" because it provides "a very solid and durable support." (7) When the web is finished, the larva kills and eats the spider, and then builds its cocoon in the spider's last web. (8) As scientist Fritz Vollrath comments in a Discovery.com article,[3] "The irony is that the poor thing that fed this larva builds it a little shelter as its last act. (9) It makes a gruesome fairy tale."

1. Watson, Isabelle. "Hymenoptera and Parasitism." *Nature*, 65. (12) 2006: 78-92.
2. Hidalgo, Roberto. "Surprising Behavior in the Insect World." *BBC News Online* 25 June 2007. 20 Jan. 2008. <http://www.bbc.org/news/2007/June25/hidalgo.html>.
3. "Taking Over: Parasites and Their Hosts." *Discovery* 29 Mar. 2007: 1-4. 22 Jan. 2007. <http://www.discovery.com/creatures/parasites.html>.

1. Which of the following would be the *best* **thesis statement** for this research report?

- **A** There are many types of parasites found all over the world.
- **B** A parasite is an organism that can provide some benefits to its host.
- **C** After the larva hatches, it feeds on the living spider's blood.
- **D** Some parasites make their hosts behave in surprising ways.

2. Which **transition** might be added to the beginning of sentence 2 to improve clarity?

- **A** By the way,
- **B** On the other hand,
- **C** For example,
- **D** As a result,

3. The **sources** mentioned in this passage come from —

- **A** print and online media
- **B** radio and television news
- **C** the Internet
- **D** scientific journals

4. The **references** for this report include —

- **A** every source written on the topic
- **B** sources the writer considered important
- **C** all sources cited in the report
- **D** all sources the writer could find

Application

Interview a Primary Source

Tell students that an interviewee may be a primary source. Pair students to interview one another on a familiar subject, such as theme parks. Then, have them write one or two paragraphs based on the information from this primary source. Remind students to organize the material and use proper report form: beginning with a topic sentence and ending with a summary. Have students use their reports to "introduce" something special about their classmates to the class.

Extension Homework

Conducting Research

Have students select a topic about which they can interview a family member or other adult, and also find secondary print or online sources. For homework, have students conduct one interview of a primary source, research one secondary source on the topic, and write a short report compiling both sources of information. Have them turn in their interview and research notes with their reports.

Assess

Independent Practice

Answers and Explanations

1. C *This sentence introduces what the passage is about. It is not about parasites all over the world (A) or ways that parasites benefit hosts (B). C is a detail, not a thesis statement.*

2. C *A is too casual for a formal report. B is a statement contrasting what has gone before, and nothing has gone before. D summarizes cause and effect. Neither B nor D fit what has been presented already in the report.*

3. A *Two of the sources are print media, not included in B and C. BBC News online is not a scientific journal (D).*

4. C *Cited means "mentioned in the report." A list of every source on the topic (A) would be too long and would not be limited to works cited. Works the writer considered important (B) may not all be cited. The same is true for all the sources the writer could find (D).*

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