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Instructional Text

Focus Lesson

Recipes, directions, user guides, and forms are all examples of **instructional text**. They teach you how to do something, such as how to bake a cake, how to take great pictures, or how to plant a garden.

An instructional text should list the materials, equipment, or ingredients you need to complete a project. Knowing the materials you need helps you follow the directions. The **directions**, or steps, of a project need to be completed in the right order to get the correct result.

Many instructional texts have charts, maps, and pictures to help you learn from what you read. These **text features** give you extra information and clues that make it easier to understand what you are reading.

Read this passage and answer the questions that follow.

Make a Nature Trail Guide!

Making a nature trail guide is a great project for your classroom. Many people walk nature trails without really stopping to see, hear, smell, and feel what is around them. Your guide can highlight all the facts, details, and simple beauty of the trail. Here's how:

Materials

- photographs and illustrations
- colored paper
- pens, colored pencils, or markers
- scissors
- glue
- stickers or other flat decorations

Numbers or special symbols point out items on a list.

What do the bullets (•) in this passage list?



Focus Lesson: INSTRUCTIONAL TEXT

- 1 Use lots of photos and illustrations. You can scan them, draw them, or use clip art. Use these items to show readers what certain animals and plants look like. You may want to point out a plant to avoid, like poison ivy.
- 2 Make your guide informative but not too wordy. Don't bog down your readers with too much text. Simply note special features along the trail. Include facts and details that will make the reader's walk more enjoyable.
- 3 Refer to certain signs along the trail. These signs often refer to items in that spot. For example, *This maple tree is known as a home to lots of squirrels. Blue jays nest in this tree every summer.* (This would be a great place to show a picture of a squirrel or a blue jay. This way, readers will know what to look for.)
- 4 Add something for visitors to do at each stop. This will make them slow down and look around them. They will start to notice things they haven't before. They might even learn something new! For example, *Feel the soft leaves of this lamb's ear plant. Take a moment to smell the sweet scent of wild lavender.*
- 5 Now it's time to check all your facts. Ask yourself questions such as, "Have you named all plants and animals correctly?" "Have you identified plants that people should not touch?"
- 6 Print your brochures on colored paper and laminate them, if possible. This will make them last longer.

An **illustration**, or picture, does not *tell* you how or when something happened. It can help you see the way something should look.

What does the illustration in this passage show?





1 Part A

What is the purpose of this article?

Look at the title and the first paragraph again. What is the article about?
The article gives instructions for how to make a nature trail guide.

Part B

Think about the purpose of the article from Part A. What are three things the author did to achieve this purpose?

The purpose of the article is to explain how to make a nature trail guide. To do this, the author gives step-by-step directions for making a guide, shows a bulleted list of materials you need to make the guide, and shows a picture of a completed guide as a sample.



Guided Practice

Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

The National Historic Landmark Photo Contest

See page 22
Focus Lesson:
Instructional Text

It's time to visit National Historic Landmarks and explore the stories that make our nation great.

- **Discover sports**—a baseball stadium, a racetrack, college bowls, and more.
- **Explore the sciences**—radar testing, a giant antenna, and a jet propulsion laboratory.
- **Appreciate the craftsmanship**—design schools, Gilded Age mansions, handcrafted cabins.
- **Understand the sacrifice**—battlefields, battleships, civil rights sites.
- **Feel the artistry**—studios, theaters, museums, and more.
- **Surprise the kid inside**—roller coasters, merry-go-rounds, and many trains.
- **Be inspired**—designed landscapes, religious buildings, and great vistas.



Fallingwater

National Historic Landmarks tell tales in neighborhoods, cities, parks, and landscapes all across the country. Get out your camera. Visit a site. Listen to the stories. Share your observations.

Rules and Entry Information

We invite you to share—in your own photographs and words—your experience of your favorite National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) across the country. This year's contest is open for entries from Monday, April 1, through Tuesday, July 9 (midnight EST).



1 Part A

What should a photographer do to determine if a place is a National Historic Landmark?

Look at the rules again. Which rule answers this question?

Part B

What should a photographer do right after he or she has determined that a place is a National Historic Landmark?

Read the article again carefully. What should the photographer do once he or she finds a National Historic Landmark to photograph?



Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.

How Pollen Tells Us About Climate

by Ross Allen

1 People with allergies know what to expect when the flowers are blooming and the bees are buzzing. Every year around springtime, pollen spores cause problems for thousands of people. They suffer from runny noses, uncontrollable sneezing, and itchy, watery eyes. But how can these problematic spores help scientists learn about the climate in the past?

2 Pollen grains are the reproductive bodies of seed plants, including flowering plants. Each of these grains has its own special shape depending on what plant it comes from. The walls of the spores are very firm and strong.

3 When pollen grains are washed or blown into water, such as lakes or rivers, their tough outer walls protect them. The grains may sink into the mud at the bottoms of ponds, lakes, or oceans. They may stay in these layers of mud for thousands of years, the same way shells and plants sometimes do. Scientists can then sink a tube into the mud and lift out a core sample. This is like when you stick a straw into a milkshake, cover the top with your finger, and lift the straw. Some of the milkshake stays inside the straw. The scientists study the shapes of the pollen grains in the samples. They may find out what kinds of plants were growing at the time the grains sank to the bottom of the water. Knowing this helps the scientists to make educated guesses about the climate at that time. They use information about where plants grow now and in the past and the climates of those areas to understand more about the past.

4 Once they take a core sample, the scientists separate the pollen and spores from the rocks and other materials. They use both chemicals and special tools for this work. The grains are very small. Many thousands could fit on the head of a pin. The scientists count and label the grains using a microscope. They may create pictures and charts of the type and amount of pollen in their samples.





5 By studying pollen from dated core samples, scientists can create records of changes in plants going back for millions of years. Not only can pollen records tell us about the past climate, but they can also tell us how we are affecting our climate. Comparing changes in plants from the last few thousand years to recent changes can also help scientists understand how human actions have affected an environment.

1 Part A

Which statement about pollen grains is true?

- A They are very small.
- B They have soft walls.
- C They do not last long.
- D They do not sink in water.

Part B

Which sentence from the article supports your answer to Part A?

- A "Many thousands could fit on the head of a pin."
- B "Pollen grains are the reproductive bodies of seed plants including flowering plants."
- C "Each of these grains has its very own special shape depending on what plant it comes from."
- D "They may stay in these layers of mud for thousands of years the way shells and plants sometimes do."

2 Part A

Which organizational pattern best describes paragraph 3?

- A sequential
- B comparison
- C cause/effect
- D problem/solution