Name _____ Date _____

Text Structure, Cause and Effect: What Makes a Dust Storm

Directions: Read the passage about dust storms. Then answer the questions, going back to the passage when you need it.

What Makes a Dust Storm

Picture a clear blue sky. Then a brown wall rolls across the land, and the day turns dim. This is a dust storm. What causes it?

First, a dust storm usually starts where the soil is dry and loose. When no rain falls for a long time, the ground dries out. Plants may wilt, and some of them die. Roots help hold soil in place. With fewer roots, the top layer of soil can lie loose.

A dust storm also needs strong wind. A thunderstorm can supply it by sending a rush of cool air down to the ground. The air spreads out fast and can scoop up loose soil. As a result, a wall of dust may rise thousands of feet and stretch for miles.

Then the storm arrives. Thick dust can hide the road, so drivers may crash. People can start coughing because tiny bits of dust bother their throats. Since dust blocks the sunlight, the day can grow as dark as evening.

People can help cause dust storms, too. By the 1930s, farmers on the southern Great Plains had plowed up wide grasslands to plant wheat. Then years of dry weather came. Because of this, crop after crop failed, and the bare soil had few roots to hold it. Wind lifted that soil into huge dust storms, and the area became known as the Dust Bowl.

1. Which sentence best states the main idea of "What Makes a Dust Storm"?

A. A wall of dust can be thousands of feet high and can stretch for miles.

B. Dust storms form when strong wind lifts loose, dry soil, and they can bury fences and fill ditches.

C. Long dry spells can leave soil loose enough for the wind to lift.

D. Dust storms form when strong wind lifts loose, dry soil, and they can put people in danger.

2. Near the start, the author asks, "What causes it?" What do the next two paragraphs each add to the answer?

A. One tells how the soil gets dry, and the other tells how heat makes the air rise in a swirl.

B. One tells how a cold front brings strong wind, and the other tells how the wind picks up dry soil.

C. One tells how the soil gets dry and loose, and the other tells how strong wind picks it up.

D. One tells how hot sun bakes the ground hard, and the other tells how wind sweeps the dust along.

3. Each of these causes comes from one sentence in the passage. Match it to the effect that the same sentence gives. Four effects will be left over.

Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ No rain falls for a long time.
2. _____ Thick dust hides the road.
3. _____ Tiny bits of dust bother people's throats.
4. _____ Dust blocks the sunlight.

A. The ground dries out.
B. Ponds and streams may shrink.
C. Drivers may crash.
D. People can start coughing.
E. People may cover their mouths.
F. The day can grow dark.
G. Street lights may switch on.
H. Drivers may slow down and stop.

4. Which signal word or phrase does the author use to link the rushing air to the wall of dust?

A. so B. As a result C. Since D. Because of this

5. Which two of these details about the southern Great Plains are in the passage? Select two.

☐ A. Years of dry weather came.
☐ B. Cattle grazed on the open grasslands.
☐ C. Farmers plowed up wide grasslands.
☐ D. Many farm families packed up and moved west.
☐ E. Farmers planted rows of trees to slow the wind.

6. Ground covered with healthy plants is less likely to lose its soil to the wind. What does the passage say that backs up this idea?

A. Grass slows the wind near the ground.
B. Roots help hold soil in place.
C. Fallen leaves can cover patches of bare soil.
D. Leaves can shade the soil so it dries more slowly.

7. Some kinds of weather can stir up strong wind near the ground. What example does the author give?

A. A winter storm can send strong winds across open land.
B. A thunderstorm can send cool air rushing down to the ground.
C. A cold front can push strong winds across dry fields.
D. A hurricane can bring strong winds far inland.

8. How does the last paragraph add to what the earlier paragraphs explain?

A. It gives an example of people changing the land in a way that helped dust storms form.
B. It gives an example of strong wind lifting soil from land that was never farmed.
C. It gives an example of farmers changing the land to keep the wind from carrying soil away.
D. It gives an example of dust storms ruining the crops that farmers had planted.