Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea and Key Details: Why Beavers Build Dams

Directions: Read the passage about beavers and their dams. Look back at it as often as you need to answer each question.

Why Beavers Build Dams

A beaver family needs water that is deep enough to keep it safe. When a stream is too shallow, beavers may build a dam to make the water deeper.

A beaver dam is a wall across a stream. Its branches may reach from one bank to the other, and a beaver may pack mud and stones into the gaps between them. Where do the branches come from? A beaver often cuts down trees with its strong front teeth and drags the branches to the water. Behind the dam, the held-back water can spread out and get deeper.

Deep water helps keep beavers safe. In the pond, a beaver family often builds a lodge. A lodge is a home made of branches and mud. Its entrances are tunnels that start under the water. That makes it hard for a hungry coyote or bear to get in. Inside the lodge, the family has a dry place to rest.

The pond also helps beavers in winter. A shallow stream can freeze all the way to the bottom. When ice forms on a pond that is deep enough, the water below it stays unfrozen. In places with cold winters, beavers often store a pile of branches under the water in fall. Once ice covers the pond, they can swim below it to reach the stored food.

A dam needs care, so beavers keep adding sticks and mud to it. Without the dam, much of the pond would drain away. The beavers would lose the deep water that helps protect them.

1. What is the main idea of "Why Beavers Build Dams"?

A. Beavers have strong front teeth that help them gather building materials.
B. Beavers build dams to make it easier to move branches through the water.
C. A beaver family often builds a lodge of branches and mud.
D. Beavers build and care for dams that turn shallow streams into ponds suited to their families' needs.

2. A dam wall holds back water. Which two details from the passage explain how a beaver builds that wall? Select two.

☐ A. A beaver may stuff grass and leaves into the gaps.
☐ B. A beaver may pack mud and stones into the gaps between the branches.
☐ C. A beaver may peel bark off a branch before adding it to the dam.
☐ D. Branches may reach across the stream from one bank to the other.
☐ E. A beaver may start the wall against a fallen log.

3. Which detail does the author use to show that a coyote on shore would have trouble getting into the lodge?

A. An entry tunnel slopes up to the room inside.
B. The tunnels open below the surface of the pond.
C. The mud on the walls can harden in cold weather.
D. Some lodges stand in the middle of a pond.

4. In the winter paragraph, what do the beavers go out to get while the top of the pond is frozen?

A. Fresh branches still growing along the bank
B. Roots growing at the bottom of the pond
C. Stems from plants growing in the pond
D. Branches they stored under the water in the fall

5. Why does the dam work described in the last paragraph matter to the beaver family?

A. Beavers build a second dam downstream to give themselves more room to swim.
B. Beavers raise the top of the dam to hold back more water.
C. Beavers add sticks and mud to keep the pond from draining away.
D. Beavers dig a channel beside the pond to bring branches back by water.

6. What change in the stream does the building paragraph describe?

A. The water can trickle through small gaps in the wall.
B. The stream can get wider and deeper.
C. The stream can get deeper and stay narrow.
D. The current can slow and mud can settle on the bottom.

7. Which choice accurately sums up the passage?

A. Beavers may start a dam by pushing branches into the streambed. Their pond helps them move branches by water and reach food in winter.
B. Beavers often cut trees for branches to build a dam. Their pond gives them a safer place to rest and a way to reach food in winter.
C. Beavers often cut trees for branches to build a dam. Their pond helps them move branches by water and reach food in winter.
D. Beavers may start a dam by pushing branches into the streambed. Their pond gives them a safer place to rest and a way to reach food in winter.