Name _____ Date _____

Comparing Text Structures and Main Idea: Two Accounts of the Johnstown Flood

Directions: Read both accounts of one flood. Go back to the accounts to check your answers.

Two Accounts of the Johnstown Flood

Less Than a Day

The flood that killed 2,209 people in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, was less than a day in the making. Heavy rain set in at about nine in the evening on May 30, 1889. By half past six the next morning, the lake behind the South Fork Dam, 14 miles upstream, had come up about two feet. Workers spent the morning heaping dirt on the dam. Still the lake climbed, and by eleven it stood even with the top. At one o'clock the first warning went down the valley by telegraph. Two more followed. At about ten past three, the dam broke. Five minutes later, the water reached South Fork and wrecked about 20 homes. At 4:07 it struck Johnstown. By six that evening, wreckage heaped at a stone bridge was on fire.

No Safe Way Out

Few storms of the 1800s soaked these hills like the one in May 1889. Still, rain alone did not doom Johnstown. A dam needs safe ways to let water out, and the South Fork Dam had none that worked well.

High water should have left through an overflow channel. The lake's owners, a fishing club, had screened it to keep fish in. Because the screens clogged, the channel carried off too little water. Pipes had once run through the bottom of the dam. An owner removed them in 1875, so the lake could not be drained.

That left one path, over the top. The club had made the dam lower to fit a wider road, so the lake got there sooner. Water running over an earth dam wears it away. As a result, this one soon burst.

1. What main idea do "Less Than a Day" and "No Safe Way Out" share?
   A. Dams have broken in many places for many reasons.
   B. Screens kept fish from leaving the lake above Johnstown.
   C. Three telegraph warnings went out before the dam finally broke.
   D. The South Fork Dam failed, and its water brought disaster to Johnstown.

2. How does the author of "Less Than a Day" put the facts in order?
   A. by the steps for keeping a dam safe
   B. by the reasons the dam was weak
   C. by how much harm each event caused
   D. by the time at which each thing happened

3. What plan does the author of "No Safe Way Out" follow in laying out the facts?

A. Each town in the valley is taken in turn, from the dam down to Johnstown.

B. Each hour of the storm is taken in turn, from night to evening.

C. Each way for water to leave the lake is taken in turn, with what went wrong.

D. Each owner of the dam is taken in turn, from first to last.

4. Small phrases can guide a reader through an account. Which two details from "Less Than a Day" help a reader keep the events in order? Select two.

☐ A. *even with the top*

☐ B. *the lake behind the South Fork Dam*

☐ C. *Five minutes later*

☐ D. *14 miles upstream*

☐ E. *By half past six the next morning*

5. An author can put a cause and its effect into one sentence. Which sentence from "No Safe Way Out" does this?

A. "Because the screens clogged, the channel carried off too little water."

B. "A dam needs safe ways to let water out, and the South Fork Dam had none that worked well."

C. "Pipes had once run through the bottom of the dam."

D. "High water should have left through an overflow channel."

6. Both accounts say that the lake reached the top of the dam. What does each account add about that moment?

A. The first gives the hour, and the second gives a reason.

B. The first names the workers, and the second names the club's leader.

C. The first gives the depth of the lake, and the second gives the width of the road.

D. The first gives the hour, and the second gives the height of the dam.

7. A reader wants to know how long the water took to travel from the dam to Johnstown. Which account helps more, and why?

A. the first account, because it gives the speed of the water

B. the first account, because it gives the time for each end of the trip

C. the second account, because it tells what slowed the water down

D. the second account, because it lists the towns along the way

8. In "No Safe Way Out," the author shows that people had made the dam less safe before the storm. Which detail does that account give as an example?

A. An owner removed the pipes at the bottom of the dam.

B. The dam had already failed once, in 1862.

C. A tower that controlled the pipes burned and was not replaced.

D. Work on the dam stopped for years while it was half built.