Five-Day Nonfiction Warm-Up Pack

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

Grade 6 ELA learners practicing evidence-based reading and reasoning with short original nonfiction texts.

Estimated preparation: 7 minutes. Estimate to print or distribute the pages, review the teacher keys, and choose an accessible response route

Estimated teaching: 30 minutes total. Estimate of five independent six-minute warm-ups, one per day

Teacher directions

Use one day page at a time. Days may be used in any order; each page repeats its directions, includes the complete reading, and stands on its own.

A practical sequence is about one minute to read and five minutes to respond. The six-minute estimate is a planning guide, not a timed requirement; allow additional time or split a page when needed.

Review each response for an accurate detail and an explanation of what it supports. For questions about limits, look for a relevant qualifier rather than one required phrase. A complete response answers all parts of its question, including the requested number of details; a single accurate detail may be useful partial evidence without completing a two-detail task. Allow extra paper when needed.

Use responses as brief formative evidence about the reasoning shown on that page. One warm-up is not a mastery measure or a diagnosis; compare patterns over time and alongside instruction.

The source notes in the teacher guide document factual checking. Learner pages contain original summaries and short agency credits; source passages and media are not reproduced.

Common interpretation criteria

Criterion 1 · look for

Connects an accurate passage detail to a clear explanation that answers the question.

Example: Names two mechanisms and explains how they relate to the flood peak.

Accept accurate paraphrase and concise reasoning. Do not score spelling, handwriting, response length, outside knowledge, or agreement with a preferred viewpoint.

Criterion 2 · look for

Keeps the claim within the passage’s limits, including variation, exceptions, or uncertainty when relevant.

Example: Qualifies an absolute claim because the source describes effects as variable.

Use only when a task asks learners to consider a limit. Accept another accurate qualification supported by the reading; do not demand technical vocabulary.

Support and extension

Support

Task context: How can a wetland help lower a flood peak? Explain two different ways described in the passage.

For learners who benefit from reduced reading load, offer one paragraph at a time, read the passage aloud or use available text-to-speech, preview the question verbs, and provide extra wait time. Learners may dictate or use an established communication method. Keep the task’s evidence and reasoning goal the same.

Extension

Task context: A student uses the moon phase alone to predict the exact high-water level at a local beach. What does the passage suggest is missing from that prediction? Explain.

Ask learners to identify one additional source of place-and-date tide information they would need for a real prediction, then explain which part of the passage supports that choice. Keep the extension separate from the original answer criteria.

Day 1 · Wetlands and flood peaks — answer guide

Intended focus: Explain how temporary storage and slower water movement can reduce some flood effects, then qualify the claim.

Question 1: How can a wetland help lower a flood peak? Explain two different ways described in the passage.

Strong response: Identifies temporary water storage and slower movement by plants, then connects them to a lower flood peak or reduced damage.

Why: Credit accurate passage details linked to the relationship named in the question; a detail without explanation is incomplete.

Also accept: Stored water has room to collect, and plants slow its movement; both can lower a flood peak.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 2: Name two conditions that affect how much floodwater a wetland can manage. Why do those conditions make a single prediction difficult?

Strong response: Names two factors such as wetland size, vegetation condition, slope, location in the flood path, or soil saturation, and explains that different conditions can change the amount of help.

Why: Credit a relevant passage detail and an explanation of the condition, distinction, or limit it shows.

Also accept: A larger wetland may have more storage room, while saturated soil may have less room for new water.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 3: A neighbor says, “A wetland guarantees homes will never flood.” Revise the claim so it matches the passage, and explain why your version is more accurate.

Strong response: Says wetlands may store some water and slow its movement, reducing some flood effects, but cannot guarantee that flooding will not occur because effectiveness varies and other measures may be needed.

Why: Credit a revision grounded in the reading; do not reward certainty that goes beyond its evidence.

Also accept: A wetland may reduce some flood effects, but the passage does not promise that flooding will never happen.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Day 2 · Spring and neap tides — answer guide

Intended focus: Compare two tidal patterns and distinguish a broad lunar pattern from a local water-level prediction.

Question 1: Compare spring and neap tides. How are the sun and moon positioned, and what happens to the average tidal range in each pattern?

Strong response: Says spring tides occur near new and full moons with the sun, Earth, and moon nearly lined up and a larger average range; neap tides occur near quarter moons at right angles and have a more moderate range.

Why: Credit accurate passage details linked to the relationship named in the question; a detail without explanation is incomplete.

Also accept: Near new and full moons, the sun, Earth and moon nearly line up, producing a larger average range. Near quarter moons, the sun and moon are at right angles as seen from Earth, producing a more moderate range.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 2: Why does the passage say the name “spring tide” is not seasonal? Use a detail to explain what “spring” describes instead.

Strong response: Explains that “spring” refers to a tide range that grows or springs toward a larger range, and the pattern occurs throughout the year near new and full moons.

Why: Credit a relevant passage detail and an explanation of the condition, distinction, or limit it shows.

Also accept: It springs toward a wider average range; spring tides happen through the year, not only in the spring season.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 3: A student uses the moon phase alone to predict the exact high-water level at a local beach. What does the passage suggest is missing from that prediction? Explain.

Strong response: Says moon phase helps describe a broad pattern but does not set the exact local level; shoreline geography, wind, weather, and a prediction for the place and date matter.

Why: Credit a revision grounded in the reading; do not reward certainty that goes beyond its evidence.

Also accept: A local forecast also needs the beach, date, shoreline conditions, and effects such as wind or weather.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Day 3 · Monarch migration — answer guide

Intended focus: Track an annual pattern across individual butterflies and generations without overgeneralizing to every monarch.

Question 1: Trace the migration cycle described. Which butterflies travel north in spring, and which generation starts the next fall migration?

Strong response: Says surviving adults from the previous southward trip move north through breeding areas; after several spring and summer generations, a new generation starts the fall migration.

Why: Credit accurate passage details linked to the relationship named in the question; a detail without explanation is incomplete.

Also accept: Adults that traveled south can move north in spring; a later generation begins the next fall migration.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 2: Why do “can reach 3,000 miles” and “may last more than two months” not describe a fixed trip for every butterfly? Does the time statement give a maximum duration? Explain.

Strong response: Explains that “can reach” and “may last” describe a possibility rather than the distance or duration of every trip. “More than two months” allows a longer trip and gives no maximum duration.

Why: Credit both the distinction between a possible journey and a fixed trip for all butterflies, and the recognition that “more than” does not set an upper time limit.

Also accept: A journey can reach that distance and last longer than two months, but every butterfly need not follow that schedule. The time statement does not tell us the longest possible trip.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 3: A learner concludes that every monarch makes the same yearly trip south and back north. Use two details to evaluate that claim.

Strong response: Says the description concerns many eastern North American monarchs, not every monarch; it also says some groups live and breed year-round and that the fall-migrating generation differs from the adults that flew north in spring.

Why: Credit a revision grounded in the reading; do not reward certainty that goes beyond its evidence.

Also accept: The cycle describes many eastern monarchs; some groups stay and breed year-round, and a new generation migrates south.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Day 4 · Saguaro adaptations — answer guide

Intended focus: Connect cactus structures to water use and explain why an adaptation does not remove every limit.

Question 1: Explain how two features in the passage help a cactus manage water. Connect each feature to what it does.

Strong response: Explains any two feature-function pairs: shallow roots quickly take in surface rain; pleats expand and shrink as water is stored and used; or night-opening pores help reduce water loss.

Why: Credit accurate passage details linked to the relationship named in the question; a detail without explanation is incomplete.

Also accept: Shallow roots take in surface rain; pleats adjust as water is stored or used; night-opening pores reduce water loss.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 2: How do saguaro pleats help as the plant takes in and uses water? What detail shows that the pleats have a limit?

Strong response: Says pleats let the plant expand and shrink with changing water storage, but a saguaro may absorb more than they can accommodate and its skin may split.

Why: Credit a relevant passage detail and an explanation of the condition, distinction, or limit it shows.

Also accept: Pleats expand and shrink with stored water, but a saguaro can take in enough water to split its skin.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 3: A reader claims, “A cactus can store any amount of rain safely.” Use the passage to revise or reject that claim.

Strong response: Rejects “any amount”: the adaptations help a cactus collect and conserve water, yet the passage says a saguaro can take in more than its pleats allow and its skin can split.

Why: Credit a revision grounded in the reading; do not reward certainty that goes beyond its evidence.

Also accept: Cacti manage water, but storage is limited: the passage says a saguaro’s skin may split if it absorbs too much.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Day 5 · Groundwater flow — answer guide

Intended focus: Use a model to explain groundwater pathways and identify why movement varies across locations.

Question 1: How does the passage challenge the idea that most groundwater flows in underground rivers? Use two details.

Strong response: Says most groundwater occupies spaces among soil and rock and can move through those spaces; open caves or tubes exist but are exceptions.

Why: Credit accurate passage details linked to the relationship named in the question; a detail without explanation is incomplete.

Also accept: Most groundwater fills spaces among rock and soil; caves or tubes can carry water, but they are exceptions.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 2: What may happen when groundwater reaches a dense layer that is hard to pass through? Explain the change in direction.

Strong response: Says some water may be redirected to move more horizontally along or above the harder-to-pass layer.

Why: Credit a relevant passage detail and an explanation of the condition, distinction, or limit it shows.

Also accept: Water that cannot pass through a dense layer may turn and move more horizontally.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Question 3: Why would one diagram or depth label not be enough to predict groundwater speed everywhere?

Strong response: Says rock porosity, permeability, aquifers, and confining layers differ by location, so they affect how fast water moves; one model cannot stand for all places.

Why: Credit a revision grounded in the reading; do not reward certainty that goes beyond its evidence.

Also accept: Different rock spaces and layers change how water moves, so one location or diagram cannot represent every aquifer.

Interpretation: Accept accurate paraphrases and other supported reasoning that answer every part of the question, including any requested number of details. Exact wording and outside technical vocabulary are not required.

Sources and fact-check record

Readings are original paraphrases. Source pages are credited for factual checking; no source text or media is reproduced.

Day 1 source records

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. “Basic Information about Wetland Restoration and Protection.” — https://www.epa.gov/wetlands/basic-information-about-wetland-restoration-and-protection

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. “Wetlands: Protecting Life and Property from Flooding.” EPA843-F-06-001, May 2006. — https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-02/documents/flooding.pdf

Day 2 source records

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Ocean Service. “What are spring and neap tides?” — https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/springtide.html

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service. “What Causes Tides?” — https://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/about/k-12-education/oceans-coasts/what-causes-tides

Day 3 source records

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “Monarch (Danaus plexippus).” — https://www.fws.gov/species/monarch-danaus-plexippus

Day 4 source records

National Park Service, Saguaro National Park. “Cacti and Desert Succulents.” — https://www.nps.gov/sagu/learn/nature/cacti-and-desert-succulents.htm

Day 5 source records

U.S. Geological Survey, Water Science School. “Groundwater Flow and the Water Cycle.” — https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/groundwater-flow-and-water-cycle

Fictional teaching response — sound for the named task

Named task: Day 1, Where Can Floodwater Go?, questions 1–3: explain two mechanisms, two conditions, and a qualified revision of the guarantee claim. These examples combine answers to all three questions.

Fictional response — sound for the named task: “The wetland can store some runoff, and its plants can slow water moving toward streams, so the flood peak may be lower. Its size and how full it already is affect how much room remains; wetlands therefore do not all have the same effect. A wetland may reduce some flood damage, but it cannot guarantee that homes never flood.”

Visible evidence: Names storage and slowing movement, connects them to a possible lower peak, gives two relevant conditions, and replaces the absolute guarantee with a supported qualified claim.

Not established: Does not establish independent reading beyond this passage or knowledge of an actual local wetland. Other accurate conditions and explanations are acceptable.

Clarify: Ask which words in the passage support the limit on the guarantee; record whether the answer was independent or read aloud.

Next teaching/evidence: If the explanation remains clear, reserve unseen Day 4 for another occasion. Ask for the two feature–function details in question 1 and the limited revision in question 3. This is different content that can provide further evidence of explaining and qualifying a text claim, not a validated equivalent test.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Day 4 only

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Fictional teaching response — partially developed

Named task: Day 1, Where Can Floodwater Go?, questions 1–3: explain two mechanisms, two conditions, and a qualified revision of the guarantee claim. These examples combine answers to all three questions.

Fictional response — partially developed: “A wetland stores some rainwater, so less may reach the stream at once. A larger wetland can hold more. It can reduce damage, but homes could still flood.”

Visible evidence: Accurately describes storage, one relevant condition and a qualified alternative to the guarantee.

Not established: Does not yet supply the second mechanism or second condition requested in questions 1–2, or explain why different conditions prevent one prediction. The omissions alone do not identify their cause.

Clarify: Ask: Which second way and which other condition did you find? Let the learner point or explain orally before deciding that the ideas are missing.

Next teaching/evidence: Reread Day 1 together. Model the distinction: soil and low areas store water; plants slow its movement. Ask the learner to explain how already-saturated ground changes the room for more water, then complete questions 1–2 with two details each. This supported return is practice. Keep Day 4 unseen for a later check of explanation and limits.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Day 1 only

Reserve: Day 4 only

Fictional teaching response — plausible error

Named task: Day 1, Where Can Floodwater Go?, questions 1–3: explain two mechanisms, two conditions, and a qualified revision of the guarantee claim. These examples combine answers to all three questions.

Fictional response — plausible error: “Wetlands store the rain, so streams cannot flood. A big wetland guarantees that the houses stay dry because it catches all the water.”

Visible evidence: Recognizes storage as relevant and notices that size matters.

Not established: Turns a possible reduction into prevention of every flood and invents unlimited storage. It omits slowing movement and a second condition, and contradicts the passage’s warning about prior saturation.

Clarify: Ask the learner to locate the text for “all” and “guarantees.” Check whether those words are their inference or a misunderstanding of “may.”

Next teaching/evidence: Use Day 1 as familiar teaching. Say: “May lower a peak allows a smaller effect or a flood that still occurs; guarantees means no exception.” Contrast the supplied already-full wetland with one with room, then ask the learner to revise question 3 using a passage detail and explain both mechanisms in question 1. Reserve Day 4 questions 1 and 3 for later if unseen; do not count the corrected Day 1 as fresh evidence.

This response is invented for teacher interpretation. Accept defensible alternatives. Record access, prior exposure and the actual response; do not assign an ability label or claim mastery from this example.

Day 1 only

Reserve: Day 4 only