Support an Answer with Textual Evidence

Classroom copy · 2 November 2026

In this 45-minute reading lesson, learners answer a how question about an original informational passage, select accurate details from different parts of the text, and explain how those details support the answer.

1 · Watch the model

Amira’s paper stars

Invented instructional example.

Amira set a small basket of paper stars beside the art table. A sign above it said, “Choose one for your notebook.” Before the next group came in, she moved the basket beside the classroom door. When the students entered, several stopped at the basket and took a star.

Read: Amira’s paper stars

Read “Amira’s paper stars.” Why did Amira move the basket beside the door? Use two details from the scene and explain how they support your answer.

Answer: Amira moved the basket so students would notice it and take a star as they entered.

Evidence: The sign invited students to choose a star, and the basket was beside the door before the next group arrived.

Explanation: Those details show why the new location made the activity easy to notice at arrival.

2 · Try together

Mei clears a path

Invented instructional example.

On the class shelf, a dictionary leaned against a row of thin notebooks. Mei slid the dictionary to the lower shelf, then placed a small label on the open space. When Mei’s partner reached for a notebook, the partner pulled one out without moving the dictionary.

Read: Mei clears a path

With a partner, answer: What change made it easier to reach a notebook? Use at least two details from “Mei clears a path.” Then explain how one detail supports your answer. First identify the change; next point to what happened afterward.

Partner draft

3 · Independent response

Carry the same reading move into information: In the scenes, details support a reason for a character's action. Now use details from two parts of the water passage to explain a route. Answer the question, select accurate details, and explain their connection.

Water from land to air and back

Water can move from Earth's surface into the air in more than one way. Evaporation changes some liquid water at the surface into water vapor. Plants also move water into the air: roots take up water from soil, it travels through plant tissues, and leaves release some as vapor. This plant process is called transpiration.

Water vapor rises with moving air currents. Higher in the atmosphere, cooler conditions can cause some vapor to condense into clouds. Winds may carry clouds to another place. When water falls from clouds as rain, snow, or hail, it is precipitation. Precipitation returns water to Earth's surface.

Read: Water from land to air and back

Using "Water from land to air and back," answer: What route can water take from Earth's surface into the air and later return? Write 3–5 sentences with a direct answer, two accurate details from different parts of the text, and how they show the route. Quote or paraphrase accurately. On paper, use the lines or continue on another page; on slides, write in your notebook or on paper.

Independent answer

Support (Independent response): If you need help organizing, split the passage into two parts. Mark a detail about water entering the air and a different detail about water returning to the surface. Write your own answer and explain how the details connect; this organizer does not choose details for you.

Extension (Independent response): Write a new question about the water passage that needs two separate details for a complete answer. Mark the details and explain how they work together.

Original MentorTeaching wording. Factual references: U.S. Geological Survey Water Science School, "The Atmosphere and the Water Cycle" (https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/atmosphere-and-water-cycle); "Evapotranspiration and the Water Cycle" (https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/evapotranspiration-and-water-cycle); "Precipitation and the Water Cycle" (https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/precipitation-and-water-cycle).

Original fictional instructional examples by MentorTeaching; no classroom event is represented.

Teacher directions

Grade 6 ELA. Adapt the reading and response demands to your students and curriculum.

Prerequisites: Read a short informational passage with teacher or independent access.; Write a sentence that answers a question in the learner’s own words.

Materials: Learner passage and task page in this pack.; Pencil or keyboard; optional highlighter.; Board or display for the teacher model (optional; the model is also printed in the pack).

Estimated preparation: 8 minutes. Basis: Estimate to review the teacher notes, print or share the learner pages, and prepare a board or display.

Estimated teaching: 45 minutes. Basis: Planned 45-minute sequence in the teacher directions; adjust the estimate to your class.

Before teaching (about 8 minutes, estimate): review the passage and key; print or share the learner pages; set out a pencil/highlighter; prepare the Amira model on a board or display. The optional display is not required.

Opening — 3 minutes (estimate): ask learners to jot one sentence answering “What makes a detail useful when you answer a question about a text?” Invite one or two brief responses. Treat this as an informal starting point, not a score or an individual mastery claim.

Read — 10 minutes (estimate): read “Water from land to air and back” once. Pause at evaporation, transpiration, condense, and precipitation. Ask learners to use nearby words to explain each term; give a neutral definition if needed, then keep the evidence task about how details support an answer.

Model — 8 minutes (estimate): think aloud with “Amira’s paper stars.” State a direct answer, point to two relevant details, and explain their connection. Make clear that copying a detail alone does not explain why it supports the answer.

Guided practice — 8 minutes (estimate): partners answer about Mei. Prompt with “Which line shows the change?” and “What happens after the change?” Do not supply the answer. Invite partners to explain why their detail matters.

Independent response — 11 minutes (estimate): learners answer the water passage question on their own. They may quote a short phrase or paraphrase. Collect one response per learner; do not score spelling or response style unless meaning becomes unclear.

Closure — 5 minutes (estimate): ask learners to underline their direct answer and mark the two details; collect the responses once. After class, use the three criteria to decide whether the next lesson should focus on selecting relevant details, connecting them to an answer, or both.

Shortened 30-minute option (estimate): opening 2 minutes; read/chunked text 6; model 4; guided practice 5; independent answer 10; closure and collection 3. Keep the same independent question and three criteria. This reduced schedule shortens discussion and model time; it does not predict how long any learner needs.

Access: offer a clean enlarged copy, read-aloud or text-to-speech, extra processing time, and a vocabulary preview when these fit a learner’s actual access plan. These supports can remove independent decoding as evidence; the Support an Answer with Textual Evidence objective assesses evidence-based answers, not independent decoding. Confirm individual access needs locally and do not assume a generic option replaces an individualized plan.

Extension: ask learners to write a new question about the same passage that could be answered with two details, then identify and connect those details. Do not require outside research or personal disclosure.

The passage paraphrases factual explanations from the cited USGS Water Science School pages. All passages, model answers, guided examples, prompts, support and criteria are original instructional writing. No official standard or code is claimed.

Model — intended evidence: The learner sees that an answer states a plausible reason, draws on relevant text details, and explains how those details support it.

Guided practice — intended evidence: A supported answer identifies moving the dictionary to the lower shelf/opening space; the partner then reaches a notebook without moving it; the explanation connects the change to access.

Independent response — intended evidence: An individual 3–5 sentence response explains at least one way surface water enters the air and how water later returns; it uses two accurate relevant details from different portions of the text and explains the connection.

— key for Model

Amira moved the basket so students could notice it and take a star as they entered.

The sign states what students may do, and the basket is moved beside the door before the next group arrives. Together these details support the reason about visibility and arrival.

Amira puts the basket by the door so the entering students can see the sign and stars. The sign invites them to take a star, and several do so when they arrive.

Accept another plausible reason supported by the sequence, such as making the stars easy to pick up on entry. Do not require the exact model wording.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3

— key for Guided practice

Moving the dictionary to the lower shelf opened space beside the notebooks. Mei’s partner could then pull out a notebook without moving the dictionary.

The before/after details show the obstacle was moved and demonstrate the improved access. The explanation connects the change to the outcome.

Mei moved the dictionary away from the notebooks, so her partner could reach a notebook without shifting it. The passage shows the open space and what the partner did.

Accept equivalent wording that accurately describes the move and connects it to reaching a notebook. Do not score grammar or stylistic similarity.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3

— key for Independent response

Water can move from land to air through evaporation and transpiration, and later return to Earth as precipitation. The text says surface liquid changes into water vapor; it also explains that plant roots take

up soil water and leaves release some as vapor. The vapor rises, cooler conditions can form clouds, and water may fall as rain, snow, or hail. These details show a path from the surface to the air and back.

The response states a route and uses accurate details from both parts of the passage: entry into air and return to the surface. It links the details rather than listing them without explanation.

Water can go from a surface into the air as vapor and return in precipitation. Evaporation moves surface water into the air, while transpiration releases plant water vapor. The passage also says vapor can condense into clouds and later fall as rain, snow, or hail. This connects the movement into air with its return.

The passage describes evaporation from a surface and plant transpiration as two ways water becomes vapor. It says the vapor can condense into clouds and that precipitation brings water back to Earth. These details explain how water moves between the surface and atmosphere.

Accept any response that directly answers the route question with at least two accurate relevant details from different parts of the passage and explains their connection. Learners need not name every process or use technical terms if the meaning is clear.

Scoring criteria: Criterion 1, Criterion 2, Criterion 3

Scoring criteria and extensions

Criterion 1 — scoring criterion

Direct answer: answers the assigned question. For the independent water-passage response, explains a route from Earth’s surface into the air and later back to the surface.

Water enters the air as vapor and later returns in precipitation.

Accept one accurate route, not every water-cycle process. Technical vocabulary is optional when the process is accurately explained.

Criterion 2 — scoring criterion

Text details: includes at least two accurate, relevant details from different parts of the assigned text. For the independent water-passage response, include movement into air and return to the surface.

Liquid surface water changes to vapor; water later falls from clouds as precipitation.

Plant roots take up water and leaves release vapor; water later falls from clouds as rain, snow, or hail.

Short quotations and accurate paraphrases both count. A detail copied without connection can meet this criterion but not the reasoning criterion.

Criterion 3 — scoring criterion

Reasoning: explains how the selected details support the answer to the assigned question.

The details show water becoming vapor, moving upward, and later returning from clouds.

Accept simple causal or sequence language. Do not require a specific sentence frame, quotation style, spelling level, or one preferred interpretation.

Support (Independent response): A read-aloud, text-to-speech, enlarged copy, vocabulary preview, or added processing time may improve access. If used, record which support was offered; read-aloud may change what can be inferred about independent decoding, while the evidence-based-answer target remains.

Original MentorTeaching wording. Factual references: U.S. Geological Survey Water Science School, “The Atmosphere and the Water Cycle” (https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/atmosphere-and-water-cycle); “Evapotranspiration and the Water Cycle” (https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/evapotranspiration-and-water-cycle); “Precipitation and the Water Cycle” (https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/precipitation-and-water-cycle).

Original fictional instructional examples by MentorTeaching; no classroom event is represented.

U.S. Geological Survey, Water Science School, “The Atmosphere and the Water Cycle” (2019): https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/atmosphere-and-water-cycle

U.S. Geological Survey, Water Science School, “Evapotranspiration and the Water Cycle” (2018): https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/evapotranspiration-and-water-cycle

U.S. Geological Survey, Water Science School, “Precipitation and the Water Cycle” (2019): https://www.usgs.gov/water-science-school/science/precipitation-and-water-cycle

Fictional teaching response — sound for the named task

Named task: Water from land to air and back — evidence-supported answer

Fictional response — sound for the named task: “Water can enter the air as vapor and return to the surface as precipitation. The passage says evaporation changes surface liquid water into vapor, which explains entry into the air. It also says some vapor condenses into clouds and later falls as rain, snow or hail; that connects the air stage to the return. These details from different parts describe one possible route, rather than claiming every drop follows it.”

Visible evidence: A direct answer, two accurately connected portions of the supplied passage and a bounded route.

Not established: Every water-cycle process or independent decoding if the passage was read aloud.

Clarify: Accept transpiration as the entry detail instead of evaporation when accurately connected to the later return.

Next teaching/evidence: Reserve The Folding Sheet on page 2 of the linked later-follow-up for a different two-detail evidence response. Its question also asks an inference about a fictional scene; record that difference rather than treating it as an equivalent informational-reading 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.

Later follow up

Read the Question and Support Your Answer — matching teacher directions and answers

Choose Evidence That Answers the Question — matching teacher directions and answers

Fictional teaching response — partially developed

Named task: Water from land to air and back — evidence-supported answer

Fictional response — partially developed: “Evaporation makes water vapor. Rain is precipitation.”

Visible evidence: Two accurate statements from the passage.

Not established: A connected answer explaining how those statements form a route from surface to air and back.

Clarify: Ask ‘Which detail describes entry? Which describes return? How do they answer this exact question together?’ Do not require one fixed sentence formula.

Next teaching/evidence: Use Choose Evidence That Answers the Question, model and guided practice. Explain why the window-repair photograph supports its claim and why the comet sticker is weaker evidence for returning the notebook. Then ask the learner to connect their two water details. This focused practice develops relevance/connection; reserve The Folding Sheet for new 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.

Model and guided practice

Reserve: Later follow up

Choose Evidence That Answers the Question — matching teacher directions and answers

Read the Question and Support Your Answer — matching teacher directions and answers

Fictional teaching response — plausible error

Named task: Water from land to air and back — evidence-supported answer

Fictional response — plausible error: “Water disappears when it evaporates, and clouds make new water that comes down as rain.”

Visible evidence: Evaporation, clouds and rain have been noticed as relevant topics.

Not established: Accurate passage meaning: liquid changes into vapor and vapor may condense; the text does not say water is destroyed or created.

Clarify: Re-read ‘changes ... into water vapor’ and the condensation sentence. Ask what changes form and what returns.

Next teaching/evidence: First correct those claims against the supplied passage. Then use the linked evidence model/guided practice to require a claim-detail connection before rewriting the water answer; keep the different later text reserved.

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.

Model and guided practice

Reserve: Later follow up

Choose Evidence That Answers the Question — matching teacher directions and answers

Read the Question and Support Your Answer — matching teacher directions and answers