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Date _____

Central Idea and Supporting Details

The **central idea** is the main point or message an author conveys in a text. **Supporting details** are specific facts, examples, statistics, or explanations that develop and strengthen this main point. Readers identify the central idea by examining how supporting details connect and what they collectively emphasize. Strong texts have clear central ideas thoroughly developed with relevant supporting details.

Read the following informational text and answer the questions.

The Hidden World of Coral Reefs

Coral reefs are among the most valuable ecosystems on our planet, despite covering less than one percent of the ocean floor. Often called the "rainforests of the sea," these underwater structures support an estimated 25% of all marine species while occupying just a fraction of the ocean's area.

The foundation of coral reefs begins with tiny coral polyps—soft-bodied animals related to sea anemones and jellyfish. These polyps form colonies and secrete calcium carbonate skeletons that create the reef structure over thousands of years. Most reef-building corals contain photosynthetic algae called zooxanthellae that live within their tissues. This remarkable partnership provides the coral with nutrients and gives the reef its vibrant colors.

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Unfortunately, coral reefs face unprecedented threats. Rising ocean temperatures cause coral bleaching, a stress response where corals expel their zooxanthellae and often die if the stress continues. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the world has already lost 30-50% of its reefs, and scientists predict that 90% could disappear by 2050 if current trends continue. Human activities directly damage these delicate ecosystems as well. Destructive fishing practices, coastal development, and pollution all contribute to reef degradation. When sediment and chemicals from land-based sources enter the ocean, they can smother coral and block the sunlight needed for photosynthesis. Despite these challenges, conservation efforts are making progress. Marine protected areas help shield reefs from harmful activities, while coral nurseries are successfully growing and transplanting coral fragments to restore damaged areas. By understanding the value of coral reefs and the threats they face, we can work together to protect these irreplaceable ecosystems.

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1. What is the central idea of this passage?

2. Identify three supporting details that develop the central idea.

3. How does the author organize the information to develop the central idea?

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Central Idea and Supporting Details-Answer Key

1. What is the central idea of this passage?

The central idea is that coral reefs are extremely valuable but endangered ecosystems that support incredible marine biodiversity despite their small ocean footprint and face serious threats requiring conservation efforts.

2. Identify three supporting details that develop the central idea.

Supporting details include: coral reefs cover less than 1% of ocean floor yet support 25% of marine species; 30-50% of reefs are already lost; and human activities like destructive fishing and pollution damage reefs.

3. How does the author organize the information to develop the central idea?

The author begins by establishing the value of coral reefs, explains their biological structure, then describes threats they face, and concludes with conservation efforts—moving from importance to challenges to solutions.