

4th Grade Reading: The Water Cycle (Nonfiction) - Answer Key

4th Grade - nonfiction comprehension and text structure | 20 minutes

Read the passage:

Earth's water is always on the move in a never-ending journey called the water cycle. It starts when the sun heats water in oceans, lakes, and rivers. The heat turns some of that water into an invisible gas called water vapor. This step is called evaporation. As the water vapor rises high into the sky, the air gets colder, and the vapor turns back into tiny drops of liquid. This is called condensation, and it forms clouds. When the drops in a cloud grow heavy enough, they fall back to Earth as rain or snow. Scientists call this precipitation. The water collects in rivers and oceans, and then the whole cycle begins again. Because the same water is used over and over, the water you drink today may have fallen as rain thousands of years ago.

Read the passage. Then answer each question in a complete sentence using the text.

1. What is the water cycle?

Answer: The never-ending journey of Earth's water as it moves and changes form.

2. What does the sun do to start the cycle?

Answer: It heats water and turns some of it into water vapor (evaporation).

3. What is condensation?

Answer: When water vapor cools and turns back into tiny liquid drops, forming clouds.

4. Use context clues: what does 'precipitation' mean?

Answer: Water falling back to Earth as rain or snow.

5. What is the main idea of the passage?

Answer: Earth's water moves in a repeating cycle of evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. (Sample answer.)

Challenge

6. Why does the author say your water may have fallen as rain long ago?

Answer: Because the same water is recycled over and over in the water cycle.