

Analyzing Key Ideas in a Text

CCLS

RI.6.3: Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

Theme: *Legendary Places*

How do you keep your friends interested when you’re talking to them? You might tell them a story. An **anecdote** is a brief story about an interesting, funny, or strange event, told to entertain or to make a point. An author might use examples and anecdotes to introduce unfamiliar ideas or events in a way that helps readers better understand them.

Read the passage below. Consider the types of information it provides about lost cities.

Lost Cities

Lost cities are places that were once well populated but whose locations were later forgotten. In a few cases, there is physical proof that a city once existed. Other lost cities live only in stories.

Did the lost city of El Dorado, ruled by a king covered in gold, really exist? In 1594, the Englishman Sir Walter Raleigh led an expedition to South America to find the mythical golden kingdom. He did not find the city, but upon his return he claimed to have done so. Stories such as Raleigh’s help keep the idea of finding lost cities alive.

Now read the passage again. This time, circle the name of the person mentioned in the text, and underline the anecdote about that person.

Who was the person? What anecdote did the passage tell about them? Read the table below to see one fact, one example, and one anecdote from the passage above.

Fact	Example	Anecdote
Lost cities are places that were once well populated, but whose locations were later forgotten.	El Dorado is one example of a lost city.	Sir Walter Raleigh led an expedition to South America to find El Dorado and told people he succeeded even though he failed.

In a text, the purpose of anecdotes and examples is to help readers better understand individuals, events, or ideas. Anecdotes and examples introduce, illustrate, and elaborate on important information. They turn dry facts into lively discussions of the real world around us.



Read the historical account about the lost city of Atlantis.

Genre: Historical Account

Atlantis: Lost City? *by Julio Gonzales*

Archaeologists and writers have long speculated about the legendary city of Atlantis and its location. According to one theory, Atlantis was an island empire located off Europe in the Atlantic Ocean. It was home to an advanced civilization that existed thousands of years ago. The people of Atlantis tried to dominate the Mediterranean region of the world. Their plans for ruling the area were cut short when the Athenians defeated their army. Soon afterward, a massive earthquake devastated the island, causing it to sink beneath the ocean.

A second theory suggests that Atlantis may have existed on the island of Thera in the Aegean Sea. The island sank into the sea after a major volcanic eruption. There is no evidence, however, to support either theory.

Explore how to answer this question: *“What information does the author include to elaborate on the history of Atlantis?”*

Think about the theories the author gives about Atlantis’s location and what happened to the city.

Look for examples that explain what may have happened to Atlantis. The chart gives an example relating to the first theory. Underline an example relating to the second one. Write it in the box.

Fact	Example
One theory is that Atlantis was located off Europe in the Atlantic Ocean.	A massive earthquake devastated the island, causing it to sink beneath the ocean.
Another theory is that Atlantis may have existed on the island of Thera, in the Aegean Sea.	

Explain the purpose of each fact and example listed in the chart above. What does this information help you understand about Atlantis?



Close Reading

In the second paragraph, the author says that Coronado left for Cibola with Niza as a guide. **Underline** the sentence that provides key information about how Coronado felt once he reached Cibola.

Hint

Which choice gives key information about what happens to Coronado as a result of Niza's stories?

Read the account about the Seven Cities of Gold. Use the Close Reading and the Hint to help you answer the question.

Genre: Historical Account

Seven Cities of Gold *by Claudia Vandango*

Five centuries ago, a monk named Marcos de Niza explored the land that would one day be called New Mexico. Niza told fantastic stories about Cibola, a place also called the Seven Cities of Gold. He claimed that he saw cities full of gold.

Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado and his soldiers set out for Cibola with Niza as their guide. When they arrived, however, Coronado was greatly disappointed to find a settlement of small pueblos instead of a golden city. One account tells that Niza admitted he had not actually seen Cibola himself.

Circle the correct answer.

Which sentence from the text best illustrates how Coronado was affected by Niza's stories?

- A "Niza told fantastic stories about Cibola, a place also called the Seven Cities of Gold."
- B "When they arrived, however, Coronado was greatly disappointed to find a settlement of small pueblos instead of a golden city."
- C "He claimed that he saw cities full of gold."
- D "Spanish explorer Francisco Vázquez de Coronado and his soldiers set out for Cibola with Niza as their guide."



Show Your Thinking

Look at the answer you chose above. Explain how the anecdote about Niza and his stories helped you understand how Coronado felt when he reached Cibola.



Tell a partner why the other choices do not illustrate how Niza's stories affected Coronado.



Read the historical account. Use the Study Buddy and the Close Reading to guide your reading.



I wonder if any explorers found El Dorado. I will underline the sentence in this account that tells me what happened to the explorers who searched for the city.

Close Reading

What happened when a new Muisca chief came into power? **Underline** the sentence that discusses the actual event that occurred.

What examples of riches were present in El Dorado and the Muisca region? **Underline** the sentences in paragraphs 2 and 4 that give information about these areas' wealth.

Genre: Historical Account

The Search for El Dorado *by Lauren Octavio*

- 1 Where did the story of the lost city of gold, known as El Dorado, come from? During the 16th and 17th centuries, explorers searched for this legendary land. The lure of gold led to much disappointment, wasted years, and even death.
- 2 Gonzalo Pizarro, a Spanish explorer in South America, first heard the tales of the golden land from the natives. They told about a place in the Andes Mountains where people worshipped a chieftain covered in gold who tossed golden treasures into a lake. Stories claimed that the chief's followers adorned themselves with gold and jewels that were plentiful in this rich land. The chieftain was known as El Dorado—one who is gilded, or covered in gold.
- 3 When the story of the golden city reached Pizarro, he was determined to find this place for himself and claim the gold. In 1541, he led an expedition to find El Dorado. The party suffered hunger, sickness, and attacks by hostile natives. After much hardship, Pizarro was forced to return home.
- 4 Where did the stories of El Dorado come from if such a city never existed? They might be based on an actual place near Bogota, Colombia. The Muisca people living there were governed by a chief. When a new chief came into power, he was covered in oil or clay and sprinkled with gold dust. In a ritual to ensure a good harvest, the chief would float out to the middle of a lake on a raft and leap in. Later, it was found that the area contained some gold mines, but the riches were nowhere as abundant as in the stories about El Dorado.



Hints

Which sentence does the author use to support the idea that many have struggled to find El Dorado?

Which choice helps the reader understand the origin of the myth of the golden chieftain?

How did the stories about the city being filled with riches differ from the reality of the Muisca region?

Use the Hints on this page to help you answer the questions.

- 1 Which sentence from the text develops the idea that many explorers have searched for the legendary land of El Dorado?
 - A “When the story of the golden city reached Pizarro, he was determined to find this place for himself and claim the gold.”
 - B “Stories claimed that the chief’s followers adorned themselves with gold and jewels that were plentiful in this rich land.”
 - C “The lure of gold led to much disappointment, wasted years, and even death.”
 - D “In a ritual to ensure a good harvest, the chief would float out to the middle of a lake on a raft and leap in.”

- 2 Which sentence describes an actual event that may have led people to believe that the chieftain of El Dorado was covered in gold?
 - A “They told about a place in the Andes Mountains where people worshipped a chieftain covered in gold. . . .”
 - B “When a new chief came into power, he was covered in oil or clay and sprinkled with gold dust.”
 - C “In 1541, he led an expedition to find El Dorado.”
 - D “The chieftain was known as El Dorado—one who is gilded, or covered in gold.”

- 3 Describe how the mythical El Dorado was different from the actual place where the Muisca people and their chief lived. Include at least one quote and specific examples from the account to support your answer.



Read the article. Then answer the questions that follow.

from “Secrets of the Lost City of Z”

by Anthony Mason, CBS News Sunday Morning

1 Since the dawn of the modern age, the notion of a pre-historic world, hidden deep in the jungle and untouched by the passage of time, has captivated our imaginations.

2 Before “Jurassic Park,” before “King Kong,” there was “The Lost World.” Written in 1912 by Sherlock Holmes’ creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, “The Lost World” was in turn largely inspired by the real-life adventures of one remarkable man: Col. Percy Harrison Fawcett.

3 David Grann, a staff writer for *The New Yorker* magazine, says in his time Fawcett was a larger-than-life figure: “Oh, he really was. I mean, he was the last of these kind of great territorial explorers who would plunge into the blank spots on the map, carrying a machete, essentially, and an almost divine sense of purpose.”

4 Grann was researching an article on Conan Doyle when he came across a reference to Fawcett.

5 “I had typed Fawcett’s name into one of these newspaper databases, and up came all these kind of crazy headlines: *Fawcett disappears into the unknown. A movie star kidnapped trying to save Fawcett.*”

6 “I had never heard of this man, and I quickly discovered there was this legendary figure,” Grann said. “And this enormous mystery that had been eclipsed by history. And it really intrigued me.”

7 So Grann started digging. Fawcett, he learned, was an honored member of Britain’s renowned Royal Geographical Society.

8 “He would live in the jungle for years at a time without contact with the world,” Grann said. He discovered stories about “how he’d battle anacondas and electric eels, and how he’d emerge with maps of regions that no one had ever come back from.”

9 In April 1925, Fawcett set out with just two others—his 21-year-old son Jack, and Jack’s best friend, Raleigh Rimmel—on what was to be his crowning adventure . . . finding the remains of a lost world he believed existed deep in the Amazon jungle of South America.

10 Fawcett called his mythical city, simply, “Z.”

11 After 30 years as an explorer, Fawcett’s survival skills were unrivaled. But this time, he went in . . . and never came out.

12 “Well, we know he got as far as a place called Dead Horse Camp, where he would send these dispatches back for five months,” said Grann. “And then after the fifth month, the dispatches ceased. And they were never heard from again.”

13 . . . setting off one of the greatest manhunts of the 20th century.

14 George Dyott was the first, taking a film crew with him into the Amazon in 1928 and radioing back regular progress reports.

15 But he never found Fawcett.



- 16 In 1996 Brazilian financier James Lynch launched a multi-million dollar expedition to finally solve the mystery. But he and his party were kidnapped by tribesmen.
- 17 They were released only after surrendering \$30,000 worth of gear.
- 18 Now, finally, after 85 years, the mystery that has tantalized so many may finally have been solved by perhaps Fawcett’s least likely pursuer.
- 19 Grann turned his jungle adventure into a best-seller, “The Lost City of Z,” in which he recounts Fawcett’s final days.
- 20 “We stayed with many of the same tribes that Fawcett stayed with,” said Grann. “And to my astonishment, they had an oral history about Fawcett and his expedition.
- 21 “It describes how Fawcett had insisted on moving eastward, towards the ‘River of Death.’ And the tribe tried to persuade them not to go in that direction. In that direction were what they referred to as ‘the fierce Indians.’ And off he marched.
- 22 “And they could see the fire for five days, rising above the treetops. And then on the fifth day, it went out as if it was snuffed out. And they had no doubt that they had been killed by the Indians.”
- 23 No physical trace of Fawcett has ever been found. But Grann’s efforts did bring one revelation to light: Fawcett may have been right about the “lost civilization” after all.
- 24 “In the last few years, archaeologists are now going into this region using high-tech gadgetry that Fawcett could never imagine—satellite imagery, ground penetrating radars to pinpoint various artifacts,” said Grann. “And they are discovering ancient ruins scattered throughout the Amazon.
- 25 “One archaeologist has found, in the very area where Fawcett believed he would find Z, 20 pre-Columbian settlements that had roads built at right angles, bridges, causeways, and that a cluster of these settlements that were interconnected had populations of between 2,500 to 5,000 people, which would have made them the size of many medieval European cities at the time.”

Answer the questions. Mark your answers to questions 1–3 on the Answer Form to the right.

Answer Form

1 (A) (B) (C) (D)

2 (A) (B) (C) (D)

3 (A) (B) (C) (D)

Number Correct

3

- 1 How does the author introduce the idea of a hidden, prehistoric city in the jungle?
- A He provides details about the precise time in which the city existed.
 - B He describes what a prehistoric jungle city would have been like.
 - C He lists novels and movies that feature examples of such cities.
 - D He explains why Percy Fawcett was interested in looking for such a city.



- 2 How does the author support the claim that the search for Fawcett was “one of the greatest manhunts of the 20th century”?
- A by discussing the time, money, and effort put into finding Fawcett
 - B by describing the mystery surrounding Fawcett’s disappearance
 - C by telling how researcher David Grann went looking for Fawcett
 - D by describing the high-tech gadgetry used to find Fawcett

- 3 Why does the author include the anecdote about James Lynch’s search for Fawcett?
- A It illustrates the idea that many people tried unsuccessfully to find Fawcett.
 - B It proves that David Grann is a more capable explorer than James Lynch.
 - C It shows that the tribesmen who kidnapped Lynch also killed Fawcett.
 - D It suggests that Fawcett’s theories about a “lost civilization” were correct.

4 The author of the passage thinks that Percy Fawcett was “a remarkable man.” Write a short paragraph explaining how the text supports the idea that Fawcett was a remarkable man. Use at least **two** details from the text in your response.

Self Check Go back and see what you can check off on the Self Check on page 1.