

Name _____

Date _____

Softwoods and Hardwoods

When building a fire, you should always consider the type of wood you want to use. There are many different types of wood, and not all of them burn in the same way. There are two main types of wood: softwoods and hardwoods.

Softwoods like fir and pine are great for new fire builders to use. They are easy to split into little pieces for kindling. They catch fire easily and produce a wonderful holiday aroma while they burn. These fires burn big and bright and are very easy to maintain.

Although softwoods are great for many reasons, they do have some disadvantages. Softwoods burn quickly. This means you need to use a lot of wood to keep the fire going.

They also do not burn very hot—not nearly as hot as hardwoods burn. This means the wood needs to be completely dry. If not, it will not burn well. Finally, softwoods do not produce long-lasting coals. This means you will probably have to rebuild your fire in the morning should it burn out overnight.

Hardwoods like oak, walnut, and madrone are good for more experienced fire builders to use. They burn very hot and can reach temperatures up to 1000 degrees Fahrenheit. They produce a fantastic crackling sound while they burn. Hardwood fires are great to have during cold winter nights because they do not burn out easily. They also produce long-lasting coals. This means that you do not have to rebuild your fire in the morning should it burn out overnight. You simply have to put more wood on the coals and your fire will begin again in minutes.

Although hardwoods are great for many reasons, they do have some disadvantages. Hardwoods are tough to split and they do not catch fire easily. They are also more expensive than softwoods.

As you can see, it is important to think carefully about the type of wood you use to make your fire. And remember that no matter what kind of wood you choose to burn, one thing never changes: you should always wait one year after cutting a piece of wood to burn it. This ensures that the wood is completely dry.

1) As used in paragraph 1, the word **consider** most nearly means

- A. purchase
- B. decide upon
- C. look closely at
- D. think carefully about



2) According to the passage, which of the following is a softwood?

- I. pine
 - II. walnut
- A. madrone only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. II and III only
 - D. I, II, and III

3) According to the author, softwoods

- I. are easy to split
 - II. produce a wonderful aroma
 - III. burn fast
- A. I only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. II and III only
 - D. I, II, and III

4) Using information in the passage as a guide, we can understand that walnut hardwood **COULD** burn at a temperature of

- A. 900 degrees Fahrenheit
- B. 1100 degrees Fahrenheit
- C. 1800 degrees Fahrenheit
- D. Not enough information is provided to answer this question.

5) Margery lives in Maine where they have long, cold winter nights. She wants to make a fire that will not burn out easily. Which type of firewood should Margery use to make her fire?

- I. oak
 - II. walnut
 - III. madrone
- A. I only
 - B. I and II only
 - C. II and III only
 - D. I, II, and III

6) In paragraphs 3 and 5, the author discusses the respective "disadvantages" of both softwoods and hardwoods. Based on its use in the passage, it can be understood that the word

disadvantages belongs to which of the following word groups?

- A. benefits, positives, profits
- B. types, kinds, categories
- C. uses, functions, purposes
- D. drawbacks, negatives, losses

7) In the final sentence of the passage, the author writes, "This ensures that the wood is completely dry." The purpose of this sentence is to

- A. show a contrast
- B. provide an example
- C. give a reason
- D. introduce an idea

8) Using your own words, explain the differences between hardwoods and softwoods.

Answers and Explanations

1) D

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

consider (*verb*): to think carefully about.

In paragraph 1, the author writes, "When building a fire, you should always consider the type of wood you want to burn. There are many different types of wood, and not all of them burn the same way." The author continues to compare the different types of wood (hardwoods and softwoods) and how they burn in a fire. Since each type burns differently, we can understand that the author wants us to think carefully about the different types before we use them. This idea is echoed at the end of the passage, as the author writes, "As you can see, it is important to think carefully about the type of wood you use to make your fire." Using this information, we can understand that choice **(D)** is correct.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)** and **(B)**. Therefore they are incorrect. Although the author probably thinks it is a good idea to look closely at the wood you want to burn, he or she describes other properties of the wood that cannot be seen (smell, temperature, endurance).

Since **(C)** presents a meaning that is too narrow in scope, we know this choice is incorrect.

2) A

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

To answer this detail question correctly, we need to find where the author discusses softwoods in the passage. A good way to do this is to scan the topic sentence of each paragraph, since this sentence will likely tell us what information can be found in the rest of that paragraph. The topic sentence of paragraph 2 reads: "Softwoods like fir and pine are great for new fire builders to use." This lets us know that the details we are looking for can likely be found in paragraph 2. In paragraph 2, the author writes, "Softwoods like fir and pine are great for new fire builders to use." This lets us know that pine is a softwood. This supports **option (I)**.

In paragraph 4, the author writes, "Hardwoods like oak, walnut, and madrone are good for more experienced fire builders to use." This lets us know that walnut is a hardwood, not a softwood. This eliminates **option (II)**.

In paragraph 4, the author writes, "Hardwoods like oak, walnut, and madrone are good for more experienced fire builders to use." This lets us know that madrone is a hardwood, not a softwood. This eliminates **option (III)**.

Therefore **(A)** is correct.

3) D

Core Standard: **Key Ideas and Details**

To answer this detail question correctly, we need to find where the author discusses softwoods in the passage. A good way to do this is to scan the topic sentence of each paragraph, since this sentence will likely tell us what information can be found in the rest of that paragraph. The topic sentence of paragraph 2 reads: "Softwoods like Fir and Pine are great for new fire builders to use." This lets us know that the details we are looking for can likely be found in paragraph 2. In paragraph 2, the author says that softwoods "are easy to split into little pieces for kindling." This supports **option (I)**.

In paragraph 2, the author says that softwoods "produce a wonderful holiday aroma while they burn." This supports **option (II)**.

In paragraph 3, the author says that softwoods "burn fast." This supports **option (III)**.

Therefore **(D)** is correct.

4) A

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In paragraph 4, we learn that "Hardwoods like oak, walnut, and madrone are good for more experienced fire builders to use. They burn very hot and can reach temperatures up to 1000 degrees Fahrenheit." This lets us know that oak can reach temperatures up to 1000 degrees Fahrenheit.

Since 900 falls into this range, we can understand that walnut COULD burn at this temperature. Therefore choice **(A)** is correct.

Choices **(B)** and **(C)** contain temperatures higher than 1,000 degrees. Therefore they are incorrect.

The passage does provide enough information to answer this question. Therefore choice **(D)** is incorrect.

5) D

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

In paragraph 4, the author talks about hardwoods like Oak, Walnut, and Madrone. He or she writes, "Hardwood fires are great to have during cold winter nights because they do not burn out easily." Since Margery wants a fire that will not burn out easily, we can understand that she should use a hardwood fire. We know that Oak, Walnut, and Madrone are all hardwoods. So, they should all be used by Margery. This supports **options (I), (II), and (III)**.

Therefore **(D)** is correct.

6) D

Core Standard: **Craft and Structure**

disadvantage (*noun*): an unfavorable position or condition; a difficulty or drawback; a shortcoming.

In paragraphs 3 and 5, the author writes, "Although [softwoods/hardwoods] are great for many reasons, they do have some disadvantages." The author continues to explain why softwoods and hardwoods are unfavorable, or are difficult to use. These are negative drawbacks to use. If a wool hat is difficult to wash, this would be a negative drawback to their use. Using this information, we can understand that disadvantages belongs to the word group containing the words *drawbacks*, *negatives*, *losses*. Choice **(D)** is correct.

The words *benefits*, *positives*, *profits* are all positive. This lets us know that choice **(A)** is incorrect.

The words *types*, *kinds*, *categories* are not negative and are unrelated to the word disadvantages. This lets us know that choice **(B)** is incorrect.

The words *uses*, *functions*, *purposes* are not negative and are unrelated to the word disadvantages. This lets us know that choice **(C)** is incorrect.

7) C

Core Standard: **Integration of Knowledge**

To answer this question correctly, it helps to use context. In the final paragraph, the author writes, "And remember that no matter what kind of wood you choose to burn, one thing never changes: you should always wait one year after cutting a piece of wood to burn it. This ensures that the wood is completely dry." Notice that in the sentence before the sentence in question, the author states his or her opinion: you should always wait one year after cutting a piece of wood to burn it. The author then tells us why this is so: this ensures that the wood is completely dry. Since the author tells us why in this sentence, we know that the purpose of this sentence is to give a reason. This means choice **(C)** is correct.

The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.