

# Active Reading

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## Section 3: How Ecosystems Change

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

When farmland is abandoned a type of secondary succession called *old-field succession* occurs. When a field is no longer cultivated, pioneer species such as grasses and weeds quickly grow and cover the abandoned land. The grasses and weeds produce many seeds to cover large areas. Over time, taller plants grow in the area and shade the ground, keeping light from the shorter plants. The long roots of the taller plants also absorb most of the water in the soil. The pioneer plants soon die from lack of sun light and water. As succession continues, growing trees deprive the taller plants of light and water. Finally, slower-growing trees, such as oaks, hickories, beeches, and maples, take over the area and block sunlight to the smaller trees. The area can eventually establish a climax community dominated by a mature oak forest.

### IDENTIFYING MAIN IDEAS

One reading skill is the ability to identify the main idea of a passage. The main idea is the main focus or key idea. Frequently a main idea is accompanied by supporting information that offers detailed facts about main ideas.

Read each question and write the answer in the space provided.

1. What type of succession is old-field succession?

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2. Summarize what happens to a field when a farmer stops cultivating it.

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### VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

Read each question and write the answer in the space provided.

3. What key terms are used in this passage?

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**Active Reading** *continued*

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4. Define the terms you identified in the previous question.

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**SEQUENCING INFORMATION**

One reading skill is the ability to sequence information, or to logically place items or events in the order in which they occur.

**Sequence the statements below to show the steps in old-field succession. Write “1” on the line in front of the first step, “2” on the line in front of the second step, and so on.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Taller plants grow in the area and shade the ground.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. A climax community exists.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Pioneer grasses and weeds grow and produce many seeds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A farmer stops cultivating a field.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Trees grow and shade the taller plants.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The taller plants die.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The pioneer plants die.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Slower-growing trees shade the smaller trees.

**RECOGNIZING CAUSE AND EFFECT**

One reading skill is the ability to recognize cause and effect.

**Read each question and write the answer in the space provided.**

13. What causes pioneer grasses and weeds that have grown in an abandoned field to die?

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14. What happens after a farmer abandons a field and the stages of old-field succession take place?

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