



Read the story carefully. Then answer each question below in a full sentence.

In nature, one change causes many more. Trace the entire chain and think about how each link depends on the one before it.

The Whispering Pines



The Whispering Pines forest, a quiet stretch of woods bordering Willow Creek, began to change. A small construction company started clearing a section of ancient pine trees to make way for new houses. The loud machinery and falling giants replaced the gentle rustle of leaves, and soon, a wide patch of earth lay bare under the sun.

With the trees gone, the ground was exposed to heavy rains. Instead of soaking slowly into the soil, rainwater rushed downhill, carrying loose soil and debris directly into Willow Creek. The creek, once clear and cool, became cloudy with sediment. Without the shade of the tall pines, the water also grew warmer under the summer sun.

The trout, which needed cold, clear water to thrive, struggled in their new environment. Many young trout could not survive the warmer, muddier conditions, and their numbers quickly dropped. This sudden decrease in fish meant less food for the sleek river otters that had made their homes along the creek banks. The otters had to travel further upstream, away from their usual hunting grounds, to find enough to eat.

Local families who enjoyed fishing for trout in Willow Creek noticed the change immediately. Their favorite spots yielded fewer and fewer catches. The small bait shop in town, which relied on these fishermen, saw its business slow down. The clearing of a few trees had started a ripple effect, changing the creek, its animals, and even the lives of the people nearby.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

(1) Which of these BEST explains why Willow Creek became cloudy and warmer? Circle the correct answer.

- A A new factory started dumping waste into the creek.
- B The local town began using more water from the creek.
- C The clearing of trees led to increased runoff and less shade.
- D A long drought caused the water level to drop significantly.

(2) Complete the sentence: Because the trout struggled in the warmer, muddier water, _____.

(3) What happened to the river otters after the trout numbers dropped?

(4) Describe how the clearing of pine trees led to fewer trout and then affected the local bait shop.



(5) What might have happened if the section of forest had NOT been cleared? Explain.

