Idaho Potatoes Reading Comprehension

Grade Level: 6 | Word Count: 449 | Lexile 1060

Idaho Potatoes: Everyday and Exceptional

Across the high desert of the Snake River Plain, Idaho potatoes have become a symbol of place as well as a staple food. Warm, sunny days are followed by cool nights, and volcanic soils—crumbly, mineral-rich, and well drained—work with careful irrigation from the Snake River to create reliable conditions for tubers to grow. Farmers talk about this combination as if it were a recipe: temperature, soil texture, and water timing blend to produce potatoes that store well and cook evenly.

Although many varieties are grown, the Russet Burbank has long been Idaho's workhorse. Its thick, netted skin protects it during storage and shipping, and its high starch content turns fluffy in the oven and crisp in a fryer. During the twentieth century, processors looking for consistent french fries favored this variety, and Idaho growers, supported by irrigation projects and research, scaled up production. Today, the state's reputation rests on both the quality of the crop and a system that moves it dependably from field to table.

Quality is not left to chance. Potatoes are harvested, cured, and held in climate-controlled storage where airflow and humidity are monitored to keep sugars and texture stable. Shipments are graded for size and appearance, and bags that carry the famous "Grown in Idaho®" seal signal that the contents meet specific standards tied to the state's geography and practices. For restaurants and schools, that seal reduces guesswork and helps keep menus consistent, whether the final product is a baked potato, a creamy mash, or a carton of fries.

Idaho's potato economy stretches far beyond the farm. Seed growers supply disease-tested starts; trucking companies and rail lines carry fresh and processed potatoes nationwide; and food plants slice, blanch, and freeze products to meet year-round demand. Communities celebrate the crop with festivals and museum exhibits, using the potato as a friendly ambassador for local history, science, and engineering—from soil probes and GPS-guided tractors to the physics of heat moving through a baking spud.

Despite the upbeat image, success requires vigilance. Drought can limit irrigation water, and pests or plant diseases can spread quickly in crowded fields. Growers rotate crops, scout for problems, and adopt new technology to use water precisely and reduce waste. In this way, Idaho potatoes are both everyday and exceptional: a familiar food made reliable through careful science, coordinated logistics, and a landscape particularly suited to growing them well.

Page 2 – Questions

1. **Which combination best explains why Idaho is well suited for potato production?**
   A. Heavy rainfall, coastal breezes, and sandy beaches
   B. Dense forests, acidic soils, and short summers
   C. Volcanic soils, warm days with cool nights, and managed irrigation
   D. High humidity, clay soils, and frequent storms

2. **Why has the Russet Burbank become a "workhorse" variety in Idaho?**
   A. It grows only in dryland fields without irrigation.
   B. Its skin and starch make it durable for shipping and ideal for baking and frying.
   C. It is the sweetest potato and used mainly for desserts.
   D. It requires no storage or grading after harvest.

3. What is the main purpose of the "Grown in Idaho®" seal as described in the passage?
   A. To show that the potatoes meet standards linked to Idaho's geography and practices
   B. To advertise only Russet Burbank potatoes
   C. To replace grading based on size and appearance
   D. To discourage restaurants from buying frozen products

4. Which sentence best states a central idea of the passage?
   A. Potatoes are simple to grow anywhere with enough rain.
   B. Idaho potatoes succeed mainly because they are famous.
   C. Most challenges in potato farming cannot be managed.
   D. Idaho's climate, soils, and careful systems produce dependable, high-quality potatoes.

5. Which detail shows that science and technology play a role in Idaho's potato industry?
   A. Communities host festivals celebrating potatoes.
   B. Potatoes are baked and served in restaurants.
   C. Growers use climate-controlled storage and GPS-guided equipment.
   D. Bags carry pictures of the Snake River Plain.

6. What inference can a reader make about Idaho's potato supply chain?
   A. It ends at harvest, because fresh potatoes cannot be stored.
   B. It depends on many coordinated steps, from seed to transportation to processing.
   C. It works only for local markets within Idaho.
   D. It avoids grading to reduce costs.

7. Which challenge is mentioned, and how do growers respond?
   A. Drought and disease; growers rotate crops, scout fields, and use water precisely.
   B. Frost and hail; growers stop irrigating entirely.
   C. Labor shortages; growers switch to tree fruit.
   D. High prices; growers plant fewer acres.

Page 3 – Answer Key

1. C
2. B
3. A
4. D
5. C
6. B
7. A