

Why We Have Time Zones

Read the text. Then answer the questions on the next page.

- 1 When it is noon in New York, it is only nine o'clock in California. The world is divided into regions called time zones, and each zone sets its clocks to a different hour. People created time zones in the 1800s to end the confusion of every town keeping its own time.
- 2 Long ago, every town kept its own time. People set their clocks by the sun. Noon was the moment when the sun was highest in the sky. The sun reaches that point at different moments in different places, so clocks in nearby cities did not match. A town to the east or west might be several minutes ahead or behind. This hardly mattered when people traveled slowly by horse.
- 3 Railroads turned all of those local times into a serious problem. A train could pass through dozens of towns in one day, and each town had its own time. Railroad schedules became a jumble of different times. Travelers missed their trains. Trains that shared a track were in danger of crashing.
- 4 The railroads solved the problem with standard time, a shared time for a whole region. On November 18, 1883, railroads in the United States and Canada divided the land into time zones. Every clock within a zone was set to the same time. Most cities soon switched to “railroad time,” and in 1918 Congress made the zones the law.
- 5 Later, time zones spread around the whole world. In 1884, people from many countries met in Washington, D.C. They chose a line on the map through Greenwich, England, as the starting point. Earth makes one full turn every 24 hours, so the globe was divided into 24 main zones, one hour apart. Travelers heading east move their clocks ahead one hour for each zone they cross.



Why We Have Time Zones: Questions

Go back to the text to find your proof. Underline it in the color shown.

1. What is the topic of this text?

- ☐ trains and tracks
- ☐ time zones
- ☐ the city of New York

2. Which sentence tells the main idea of the whole text?

red

- ☐ People created time zones in the 1800s to end the confusion of every town keeping its own time.
- ☐ Earth makes one full turn every 24 hours.
- ☐ Greenwich is in England.

3. What is the main idea of paragraph 3?

orange

- ☐ Trains carry passengers.
- ☐ Railroads turned all of those local times into a serious problem.
- ☐ A day has 24 hours.

4. Write two details from paragraph 4 that tell more about its main idea.

yellow

5. What is paragraph 2 mostly about?

green

6. Which detail does NOT belong in this text?

- ☐ Every clock within a zone was set to the same time.
- ☐ People once set their clocks by the sun.
- ☐ Penguins huddle together to stay warm.

Why We Have Time Zones: Answer Key

Answers are in green. The proof is where to find each answer in the text.

1. What is the topic of this text?

- ☐ trains and tracks
- ☒ **time zones**
- ☐ the city of New York

Proof The topic is named in the title and comes up in every paragraph.

2. Which sentence tells the main idea of the whole text?

red

- ☒ **People created time zones in the 1800s to end the confusion of every town keeping its own time.**
- ☐ Earth makes one full turn every 24 hours.
- ☐ Greenwich is in England.

Proof Paragraph 1: "People created time zones in the 1800s to end the confusion of every town keeping its own time."

3. What is the main idea of paragraph 3?

orange

- ☐ Trains carry passengers.
- ☒ **Railroads turned all of those local times into a serious problem.**
- ☐ A day has 24 hours.

Proof Paragraph 3: "Railroads turned all of those local times into a serious problem."

4. Write two details from paragraph 4 that tell more about its main idea.

yellow

In 1883, railroads divided the land into time zones. Every clock within a zone was set to the same time.

5. What is paragraph 2 mostly about?

green

How every town once kept its own time by the sun.

6. Which detail does NOT belong in this text?

- ☐ Every clock within a zone was set to the same time.
- ☐ People once set their clocks by the sun.
- ☒ **Penguins huddle together to stay warm.**

Proof It is not about the topic of the text.