**Apache ZooKeeper is a centralized service for maintaining configuration information, naming, providing distributed synchronization and group services**. It is used by Apache Kafka to manage and coordinate the brokers in a Kafka cluster. ZooKeeper helps Kafka in various ways, such as:

1. Maintaining metadata: **ZooKeeper maintains metadata about the Kafka cluster**, including information about brokers, topics, partitions, and the leader for each partition.
2. Leader election: **ZooKeeper helps in leader election for partitions of each Topic in Kafka**. Each partition has one leader and multiple followers, and ZooKeeper helps in electing the leader and notifying all brokers about the leader.
3. Configuration management: **Kafka uses ZooKeeper for storing and managing configuration settings**, such as the broker settings and topic configurations.
4. Cluster coordination: **ZooKeeper helps in coordinating tasks among brokers, such as determining which broker is the leader for a partition and handling failover scenarios.**

Overall, ZooKeeper plays a critical role in ensuring the reliability and consistency of Apache Kafka clusters.