

## Informational Reading Comprehension

# Invasive Species

Read the text below, and then answer the questions on the following page.

- 1 What do a zebra mussel, a Burmese python, a water hyacinth, and a large swimming rodent called a nutria have in common? They are all considered “invasive species” in the United States. Invasive species are non-native species that cause harm in some way.



**Water hyacinth**

- 2 How do these seemingly **benign** creatures cause harm? Most often, their presence upsets the delicate ecological balance of the native ecosystem in some way. These non-indigenous species are not deliberately harming their new environments; they are just doing what they’ve always done to survive. These natural behaviors, however, can have unintended consequences in a new ecosystem. For example, invasive species might be better at catching prey than native species. They might eat native species or compete for the same food sources as the native species. They might

reproduce more quickly. They might alter the environment. And once one species in an ecosystem is negatively impacted, it’s likely that all the species in the ecosystem will be impacted as well—including humans.

- 3 Despite the fact that invasive species get more attention, many common plants and animals in the United States are actually non-native species. This simply means that they were not here originally; they were brought here. For instance, honey bees, introduced to America from Europe in the 1600s, are essential pollinators of food crops. Other non-native animal species include wild pheasants, horses, and domesticated cows. Many crops, including peaches, carrots, and apples, originated on other continents and were later introduced in North America. These are just a few of the non-native organisms imported into North America.



**Nutria**

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Read the text below, and then answer the questions on the following page.

4 How are non-native species brought to their new environments? This transportation can happen deliberately or accidentally. The invasive nutria were imported from South America by fur farmers in the 1880s. The fur farming business wasn't successful, but the nutria were! They established themselves in the wild, adapting quite well to their new environment. But they reproduce quickly and consume grasses along waterways, causing erosion and loss of habitat for native waterfowl. On the other hand, tiny zebra mussels arrived in the United States by accident, probably sometime in the 1980s. These tiny creatures and their even tinier, microscopic larvae hitched a ride on the hulls of container ships traveling from Europe. Like nutria, these tiny creatures reproduce fast. They have spread quickly on boats that travel from one body of water to another. They crowd out native mussels, and since they filter water very efficiently, they've made some lakes too clear for certain native fish to survive.

5 Because invasive species can cause so many problems, many people and organizations have sought ways to control or eradicate this major biodiversity threat. There are information campaigns to help people understand how to recognize and report invasive species. There are rules that require boaters, for example, to clean their hulls and wait for certain periods of time before putting their boats into a different body of water.



**Zebra mussel**

There are government-funded "invasive species strike teams" that are deployed to national wildlife parks and refuges to eradicate invasive species as soon as they're detected. Dogs have been trained to search out invasive species being smuggled into the country illegally. There are even efforts to encourage people to eat invasive species, such as the lionfish that are decimating coral reef ecosystems off the coast of Florida.

6 Nevertheless, despite people's best efforts to stop the invasion, it's incredibly difficult to fight an invasive species that has established itself. Some scientists believe that we just have to learn to live with them. After all, species have been migrating around the world for all of history. Perhaps the best way forward is to learn how to manage existing invasive species to limit their harm to native ecosystems and spread awareness about how to prevent the introduction of invasive species in the future.

Informational Reading  
Comprehension**Invasive Species**

Answer the questions about “Invasive Species.”

**1.** What central idea does the author convey in paragraph 2?

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**2.** In the second paragraph, what does the word benign mean?

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**3.** List four ways that the introduction of a new species into an ecosystem might be harmful.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. \_\_\_\_\_  
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**4.** Describe the distinction between non-native and invasive species.

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**5.** What is true of most non-native species in the United States?

- a. They are harmful to native ecosystems.
- b. They were introduced in the 1600s.
- c. They have no significant negative impact.
- d. They reproduce and spread very quickly.

**Invasive Species**

Answer the questions about “Invasive Species.”

- 6.** What connections and distinctions exist between honey bees and zebra mussels in the United States?

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- 7.** Compare the impact of nutria and zebra mussels in the United States.

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- 8.** Cite two specific details that the author uses to acknowledge that people are responsible for the presence of invasive species in the United States.

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- 9.** Summarize the efforts that people are making to combat invasive species.

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- 10.** What alternative approach to dealing with invasive species does the author put forward?

- a. Deploy permanent strike teams to all national parks and wildlife preserves.
- b. Ban travel from all countries with potentially harmful species.
- c. Bring in beneficial non-native species to fight off the invasive species.
- d. Find ways to live with invasive species while mitigating their harmful effects.