

Nonfiction Reading Test

Asian Carp

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

The United States has a lengthy history of going to war. It is a nation born from war. Pick any year since 1776, and the odds of America being involved in at least one war is over 90%. Every US President has faced war. Still, it may surprise you to hear that the US government is at war with a fish.

Asian carp were introduced to American waters during the 1970s. Southern fish farmers began importing them to help clean their ponds. Asian carp are phenomenal cleaners. Unfortunately, it didn't take too long for them to escape from these ponds, perhaps from flooding, and get into the Mississippi River. From there they have followed their natural tendency to swim upstream. This tendency may lead them into the Great Lakes and Canada, a nightmare scenario for fisherman.

Asian carp are large fish. One species, the silver carp, can grow to be 100 pounds. But despite their size, they feed from the bottom of the food chain. That means that they eat plankton and algae. A one hundred pound fish can eat an awful lot of sea scum, and some of it is toxic. The carp are *resistant* to the toxins, but we aren't. Some Asian carp are hazardous to eat because they have so many algal toxins in their systems. They also have lots of tiny bones in their meat, which makes them difficult to prepare. Asian carp is not a popular delicacy.

Introducing the Asian carp into waters that have not known them can be devastating. Beneath the surface of the water is a unique ecosystem. This system rests delicately on a balance that has evolved over millions of years. Then along come these big, hungry bottom feeders to mess up everything. They breed rapidly and densely populate the waters. Worse still, they compete with the native bottom feeders. The native bottom feeders are smaller. Larger, tastier fish like salmon eat them. The native bottom feeders are an important part of the ecosystem. When the Asian carp outperform them, the whole food chain suffers, all the way up to the people.

Not only do Asian carp mess up the food chain, they mess up people. Seriously. An Asian carp will bust you in head. Remember that silver carp can be 100 pounds. There is a reason why they are also known as "flying carp." This particular species of Asian carp has a tendency to jump when frightened. They can jump up to ten feet in the air, and the sound of boat motors frightens them. Watch out watersportists! In 2003 a woman jetskier collided with one and broke her nose and a vertebra. She almost drowned. In 2008 a teenager broke his jaw on one while tubing. Many others have been injured by these flying logs. Asian carp pose a serious threat to water skiers and boaters.

In 2007 the U.S. Department of the Interior declared all silver carp to be an injurious species. In 2010, the State of Michigan passed the \$30 million CARPACT. In 2012 Congress approved the "Stop Invasive Species" act, legislation written solely to protect the Great Lakes from Asian carp. The government has been on the offensive against these large-bellied invaders.

But Asian carp are difficult to catch. Since they eat from the bottom, they do not go for lures or baits like most large fish. The best way to stop them is to keep them out. The Great Lakes are connected to the Mississippi River through the 28-mile Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. For Chicagoans, it is the final point of resistance.

A series of multimillion-dollar electrical barriers have been built along the canal. The barriers are effective at keeping adult carp at bay, but some fear that baby carp may pass through. The United States Army Corps of Engineers has been deployed along with EPA. In 2009 they poisoned the entire canal with rotenone, a chemical that kills fish. The \$3 million operation netted over 90 tons of dead fish, and a single carp.

Some think that Great Lakes must be cut off from the Mississippi River. The Michigan Attorney General sued to have the canal closed. The Ontario government and some Great Lake states have also taken legal action. But the courts have been persuaded by the value of the canal as a shipping conduit thus far. In the meantime, the barriers continue to hold, but how long can they? The carp have the Great Lakes under siege. Is this a war that we are destined to lose?

1. Which statement best expresses the main idea of the second paragraph?
 - a. Asian carp were brought to America during the 1970s to assist Southern fish farmers.
 - b. Asian carp are remarkable cleaners, which makes them highly desirable fish to have.
 - c. Asian carp were supposed to clean ponds but they escaped and are headed north.
 - d. Asian carp are excellent at swimming upstream and cleaning up plankton.

2. Which is **not** a reason why Asian carp is an unpopular menu item?
 - a. It is hard to prepare because of all the little bones.
 - b. They are a very fattening fish.
 - c. Some of them are toxic and unsafe to eat.
 - d. They are bottom feeders.

3. Which statement would the author most likely **disagree** with?
 - a. Asian carp outperform many native bottom feeders.
 - b. Asian carp could disrupt the ecosystem in Lake Michigan.
 - c. One species of Asian carp is the silver carp.
 - d. Asian carp are disliked because they eat salmon.

4. Which best describes the text structure of the fourth paragraph?
 - a. Chronological order
 - b. Cause and effect
 - c. Compare and contrast
 - d. Problem and solution

5. Which person would be most threatened by silver carp in a local water source?
 - a. A waterskier
 - b. A chicken farmer
 - c. A bungee jumper
 - d. A beachgoer

6. Which best describes the word *resistant* as it is used in the third paragraph?
 - a. To be allergic to something
 - b. To be unaware of something
 - c. To be unaffected by something
 - d. To be attracted or drawn to something

7. According to information in the article, which event happened **last**?
 - a. Asian carp escaped from southern fish farms.
 - b. The Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal was poisoned with rotenone.
 - c. A teenager broke his jaw on a silver carp while tubing.
 - d. Congress approved the "Stop Invasive Species" act.

8. Which of the following statements is **false**?
 - a. Silver carp have been declared an "injurious species" by the government.
 - b. Silver carp are also known as "flying carp."
 - c. Silver carp can grow to be 100 lbs.
 - d. Silver carp can jump up to twenty feet in the air.

