

Nonfiction Reading Test

Mongoose

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

If you plan on going to Hawaii, don't bring any pets. Hawaiians are wary of letting in foreign animals. Your beloved Rex or Fi-fi could spend up to 120 days in quarantine. They have strict rules for importing animals. They carefully screen all incoming pets. Who could blame them? They've had problems with new animals in the past.

The black rat was introduced to Hawaii in the 1780s. These ugly suckers *originated* in Asia, but they migrated to Europe in the 1st century. Since then they've snuck on European ships and voyaged the world with them. These rats carry many diseases including the plague. They are also good at surviving and tend to displace native species. That means that after they infest an area, there will be fewer birds and more black rats. Most people prefer living around birds.

Since their arrival in Hawaii, black rats have been pests. They've feasted on sea turtle eggs. They've eaten tree saplings, preventing trees from being reforested. And they've been a leading cause in the extinction of more than 70 species of Hawaiian birds. They love to climb trees to eat bird eggs. They also compete with forest birds for food, such as snails, insects, and seeds.

Perhaps more troubling, black rats threaten humans. They spread germs and incubate disease. They are a vector for more than 40 deadly illnesses. Some think that rat-borne diseases have killed more people than war in the last 1,000 years. Rats also eat our food. They eat more than 20% of the world's farmed food. And that's why the mongoose was brought to Hawaii.

During the mid 1800s, the Hawaiian sugar industry was thriving. Americans were just realizing that they loved sugar. Hawaii was pretty much the only place in America where one could grow sugarcane. But those filthy vermin were tearing up the fields. Black rats were destroying entire crops. What's a plantation owner to do? The answer is simple. Import an animal known to kill rats. What could go wrong with that? In 1883 plantation owners imported 72 mongooses and began breeding them.

People *revere* the mongoose in its homeland of India. They are often kept tame in Indian households. Mongooses feed on snakes, rats, and lizards, creatures that most people dislike. They are also cute and furry. And they kill deadly cobras. What's not to love? Sadly, India is a much different place than Hawaii.

When the mongooses got to Hawaii, they did not wipe out the rats as plantation owners hoped. Instead, they joined them in ravaging the birds, lizards, and small plants that were native to Hawaii. It's not that the mongooses became friends with the rats. They still ate a bunch of them. But mongooses are not too different from most other animals: they go for the easy meal. In Hawaii they had a choice. Pursue the elusive black rat or munch on turtle eggs while tanning on the beach. Most took the easy route.

Now Hawaii has two unwanted guests defacing the natural beauty. The Hawaiians have learned their lesson. Talks of bringing in mongoose-eating gorillas have been tabled. So don't get uptight when they don't welcome your cat Mittens with open arms. They're trying to maintain a delicate ecosystem here.

1. Based on the text, which best explains how black rats were introduced to Hawaii?

- a. The native Hawaiians imported them to solve a problem with their crops.
- b. The Asians brought them to Hawaii when they first arrived.
- c. The Europeans brought them on their ships.
- d. The rats were able to swim to Hawaii from Asia.

2. Which best defines the word *originate* as it was used in the **second** paragraph?

- a. To come from a place
- b. To go to a place
- c. To become independent
- d. To wander the world

3. Which event happened **first**?

- a. The mongoose was introduced to Hawaii
- b. The black rat was introduced to Hawaii
- c. The black rat migrated to Europe
- d. Plantation owners bred mongooses

4. Which statement would the author most likely **disagree** with?

- a. Black rats threaten many creatures native to Hawaii.
- b. Mongooses threaten many creatures native to Hawaii.
- c. Mongooses were brought to Hawaii intentionally.
- d. The only reason people dislike rats is because they are ugly.

5. Which best express the author's main purpose in writing this text?

- a. To persuade readers to protect the endangered mongoose
- b. To describe the habits and hazards of the black rat
- c. To inform readers about species that have invaded Hawaii
- d. To entertain readers with tales of a mongoose's adventures

6. Which best expresses the main idea of the **sixth** paragraph?

- a. This paragraph is about Indian culture and wildlife.
- b. This paragraph is about the mongoose's role in Indian society.
- c. This paragraph is about the lifecycle of the mongoose.
- d. This paragraph is about how mongooses migrated to India.

7. Which statement is **false** according to information in the text?

- a. Rats eat lots of vegetation and crops.
- b. Mongooses eat sea turtle eggs.
- c. Rats climb trees and eat bird eggs.
- d. Mongooses have spread more than 40 diseases.

