



Paper-and-pencil assessments will contain selected response items as well as performance tasks. Online assessments will also contain technology-enhanced items.

from **“Science Invites Us to Be Kind to Snakes”**

by Dr. W. H. Ballou

- 1 The United States Department of Agriculture experts are asking the people to refrain from killing harmless snakes. California has passed a law protecting the gopher snake of that state. Gopher Snake Clubs, in order to carry on the campaign of education, have been formed by the dozen. In New York City, a Reptile Study Society has been organized for the same purpose of being kind to mankind’s legendary worst enemy. Legislation similar to that enacted by California is being considered in other parts of the country.
- 2 One of the sayings of the Reptile Study Society and which is supported by the government is, “Kill a snake and you destroy 100 pounds of wheat because the number of rats and mice that would eat that much wheat in a year are just the number one snake would itself eat.”
- 3 The defense for the snakes files the following points:
 1. They feed on insects, slugs, snails, etc., that destroy grains, vegetables, and fruit.
 2. They feed on moles and gophers, which destroy lawns and gardens.
 3. They feed on rats and mice, which not only destroy foodstuffs, but carry disease.
 4. Some species, such as the king snakes, live almost exclusively on rattlesnakes, copperheads, moccasins, and other poisonous varieties. They are immune to the poison of these reptiles, but we do not know why and wish we could find out.
- 4 The accusation against them is this:
 1. The poisonous ones are mighty bad with which to come into contact.
 2. All serpents produce in most of us the most unpleasant of sensations.
 3. They catch birds and eat them, particularly songbirds. Against this, the defense offers in evidence that our domestic cats kill and devour more birds than all the snakes do and are not a fraction as useful. Therefore, if this point is sufficient to sign the death warrant of the serpent, it ought doubly to sign that of the cat.
 4. They rob birds’ nests, eating the eggs, particularly of species that nest on the ground. Snakes can, and do, to some extent, climb up trees and rob nests that are low down. At the same time a snake exposes himself while robbing a nest, it is likely to be seized by a hawk. So nature nicely balances that matter.
- 5 Leaving man out of the matter, snakes have more natural enemies than all other animals combined—another reason, say his defenders, for declaring a closed season on his slaughter by man.
- 6 All species of hawks hovering in air above the snake regard him as an easy meal ticket. Owls feed on him. Many owls constantly search the swamps and meadows for snakes to eat. Night owls get snakes on their nocturnal excursions. There are snake birds and many species of wading water birds, such as the heron family, that go after snakes that live in water.

- 7 The small boy is the worst human enemy of snakes, and it will require much agitation in the common schools and among boy scouts to persuade them not to kill.
- 8 All told, nature is pretty well able to keep down to normal the supply of snakes.
- 9 The rising menace to all snakes is the increasing commercial use of their skins. Formerly this use was confined to rattlers. It is now rapidly extending to all species. The most gaudily colored snakes will be the first to become extinct.
- 10 It is highly probable that all species of rattlesnake everywhere will become hard to find, if not totally exterminated. Like the alligator, the rattler is the victim of commerce because of his valuable skin. Thousands of people are hunting out the rattler in his lair and selling his hide to the tanneries.

Excerpt from "Science Invites Us to Be Kind to Snakes" by Dr. W. H. Ballou. *The Washington Times*. August 3, 1919. Washington, D.C.

Part A

1. What does the word *commerce* mean as it is used in paragraph 10?

- A trade
- B misconception
- C illness
- D discrimination

Part B

2. Which phrase from the passage *best* helps the reader understand the meaning of *commerce*?

- A "...if not totally exterminated."
- B "Like the alligator, the rattler is the victim..."
- C "Thousands of people are hunting out the rattler..."
- D "...selling his hide to the tanneries."

3. Which two details should be included in an objective summary of the passage?

- A** Snakes offer many benefits to humans.
- B** Strict laws protect snakes in most of the states in our country.
- C** Owls and other birds feed on the different varieties of snakes.
- D** Although some people are afraid of snakes, snakes have many enemies in the wild.
- E** Several species of snakes are already extinct because people hunt them for their skins.

Part A

4. How does the author's use of text structure contribute to the development of the passage?

- A** The author's use of description develops the idea that humans should not kill snakes because snakes have plenty of enemies in their environments already.
- B** The author's use of problem and solution develops the idea that the demise of snakes can be solved by eliminating the commercial use of snakeskin.
- C** The author's use of chronology develops the idea that snake populations will continue to decrease over time if their mistreatment is not ended.
- D** The author's use of cause and effect develops the idea that leaving snakes alone in the wild will help increase their populations once again.

Part B

5. Which detail from the passage provides evidence to support the answer to Part A?

- A** "They feed on insects, slugs, snails, etc., that destroy grains, vegetables, and fruit." (paragraph 3)
- B** "All species of hawks hovering in air above the snake regard him as an easy meal ticket. Owls feed on him. Many owls constantly search the swamps and meadows for snakes to eat. Night owls get snakes on their nocturnal excursions." (paragraph 6)
- C** "All told, nature is pretty well able to keep down to normal the supply of snakes." (paragraph 8)
- D** "It is highly probable that all species of rattlesnake everywhere will become hard to find, if not totally exterminated. Like the alligator, the rattler is the victim of commerce because of his valuable skin." (paragraph 10)

- 6. Based on the passage, which detail supports the author’s claim about the defense of snakes?**
- A** “California has passed a law protecting the gopher snake of that state.” (paragraph 1)
 - B** “They feed on moles and gophers, which destroy lawns and gardens.” (paragraph 3)
 - C** “Many owls constantly search the swamps and meadows for snakes to eat.” (paragraph 6)
 - D** “All told, nature is pretty well able to keep down to normal the supply of snakes.” (paragraph 8)

<h2>Performance Task</h2>

Performance task items for language arts will be scored by teachers in each school/district using rubrics and/or scoring guides provided by Instructure. Though this is an example of a performance task, the products each school/district will receive with an assessment order will be cold read passages that will be delivered with the first assessment.

Based on the passage, “Science Invites Us to Be Kind to Snakes,” write an essay to explain why people should be kind to snakes. Provide details from the passage to support your answer.