

NESSIE

The Loch Ness Monster

The monster said to be living in the waters of Loch Ness in Scotland is not very scary. Nessie, as she is known, does not attack people. She does not destroy property. She does not try to frighten anyone. In fact, she is quite shy. Usually she goes about her own business and avoids humans. For that reason, most people are not afraid of her. But they are curious. They are incredibly curious. People find Nessie so intriguing that thousands of tourists journey to the Highlands of Scotland each year in hopes of seeing her.

² Although Nessie now spends most of her time in hiding, she was not always so shy. According to legend, the Loch Ness Monster was once a hostile beast. In 565 A.D., a priest now known as Saint Columba had a very close call with it. He was traveling through Scotland teaching the Christian religion. When he reached the shores of a lake called Loch Ness, he found a funeral in progress. The dead person, he was told, had been killed by the savage bite of a creature living in the lake.

³ Though the news disturbed him, Columba was determined to cross the lake. He wanted to take his religion to the people living on the other side. Columba asked his servant to wade into the water to get a boat that was nearby. Perhaps the man's splashing disturbed the monster, for suddenly the creature rose from the water. With a menacing roar, Nessie swam straight for the poor servant. Columba rushed forward, his hand raised. Making the sign of the cross in the air, he cried out, "Think not to go further, nor touch thou that man. Quick! Go back!" According to the man who wrote Columba's biography, the monster withdrew as if "dragged by cords."

⁴ After her meeting with Saint Columba, Nessie retreated into the depths of Loch Ness. Local folks still caught an occasional glimpse of the monster, but she no longer bothered anybody. In fact she stayed pretty much out of sight until 1933. In that year, a new highway was built next to the lake. During construction, a great deal of dynamite was used to blast through rock. It may have been the noise of the blasting that disturbed Nessie. Or perhaps she was stirred by the boulders that the workmen pushed into the water. In any event, as soon as the highway was opened, Nessie began to appear more often.

⁵ Two of the first people to see her at that time were Mr. and Mrs. George Spicer of London. They were traveling on the newly built highway when Nessie crossed the road ahead of them. It was broad daylight. What was their reaction to the incredible sight? "It was simply horrible," said Mr. Spicer. Mrs. Spicer described Nessie as "a giant snail with a long neck."

⁶ Since 1933, around nine thousand sightings have been reported. Nessie has been seen both on land and in the water. Sometimes she appears when the area is almost deserted. But other times she surfaces in full view of many witnesses. Once she showed herself

when a bus carrying 27 passengers was passing by. All the people aboard the bus reported that they watched the monster swim for some time. In his book *The Monsters of Loch Ness*, Roy P. Mackal reports 254 detailed eyewitness accounts of sightings of Nessie in the water. He also describes 18 incidents in which Nessie was seen thrashing around on the shores of Loch Ness.

⁷ Many people have tried to photograph Nessie. The most famous picture ever captured of her was taken by a surgeon named H. K. Wilson. Known as the “surgeon’s photo,” the picture appeared on the front page of a London newspaper, *The Daily Mail*, in 1934. It shows Nessie with a long, thick neck shaped somewhat like an elephant’s trunk. Her head is small and flat on top, like the head of a snake. And her huge barrel-shaped body sports a 25-foot tail.

⁸ While many people have tried to capture proof of Nessie with a camera (and a number have succeeded in getting pictures much like the surgeon’s photo), others have used more complex equipment. Telescopes, binoculars, and movie and television cameras have all been used to look for her. A helicopter and two mini-submarines have hunted her. Sonar has also been used to try to detect her presence. Sonar is a device used to locate underwater objects by bouncing sound waves off them.

⁹ Some scientists think that all those efforts have been successful. They say that the sonar results indicate that a large animal is swimming deep in Loch Ness. They also believe that the many photographs and films of Nessie show that she exists. Many pictures show a creature stirring up the water and leaving a trail of waves as it moves along. The scientists argue that such wave patterns could be created only by a huge creature.

¹⁰ Not all scientists, however, are convinced that Nessie is real. Some think that the sonar results proved nothing. Many believe that the creatures in the photographs are simply seals or otters. Others claim that the objects seen in the water are merely sticks or logs.

¹¹ Part of the reason for all the disagreement is that Nessie is terribly shy. Because she hides from people, it is difficult to observe her. But the confusion is not all her fault. Part of the trouble lies with Loch Ness itself. The lake is very large. It is 24 and a half miles long. Some sections are more than 920 feet deep. The water is dark and murky, and its average temperature is only 42 degrees Fahrenheit. The murkiness is caused by peat, which is created by rotting moss and other plants. In Loch Ness the peat is so thick that it is possible to see only to a depth of about 10 feet. In addition, the banks of the lake are very steep—almost vertical. Such conditions make photography almost impossible.

¹² While the size of Loch Ness hinders observers, it is ideal for Nessie. Six rivers that flow into Loch Ness bring with them enough fish to feed many monsters. It is estimated that the lake contains 30 million large salmon, plus trout, large pike, and char. It also houses tons of fat, juicy eels. Given all that food, chances are that Nessie never goes hungry.

¹³ Although the idea of a fish-eating monster may seem a bit strange, there was once a whole group of large creatures that lived on fish. They were dinosaurs called plesiosaurs. They lived in the oceans 65 to 70 million years ago. Some people think that Nessie is a descendant of those dinosaurs. It is possible that plesiosaurs got into Loch Ness when it

was still part of the Atlantic Ocean. When land later enclosed the lake, the creatures may have gotten trapped there. If Nessie is descended from the plesiosaurs, she may be a member of a whole family of similar creatures living in the waters of Loch Ness.

¹⁴ And speaking of families, Nessie may even have relatives in other parts of the world. Australia has a Nessie-like creature that has been seen in several lakes and rivers. The rivers of Africa, too, contain animals whose descriptions make them sound like first cousins of Nessie. North America also has its Nessie look-alikes. Two lakes in Canada have their own versions of Nessie, and Lake Champlain is home to a monster called Champ. United States monsters also include one that has been spotted in Arkansas's White River. And one in Chesapeake Bay has a name similar to Nessie's. Her name, as you may have guessed, is Chessie.

If you have been timed while reading this article, enter your reading time below. Then turn to the Words-per-Minute Table on and look up your reading speed (words per minute). Enter your reading speed on the graph on.

Reading Time: Lesson

Minutes Seconds

A Finding the Main Idea

One statement below expresses the main idea of the article. One statement is too general, or too broad. The other statement explains only part of the article; it is too narrow. Label the statements using the following key:

M—Main Idea B—Too Broad N—Too Narrow

- _____ 1. It is possible that a sea-creature ancestor of Nessie got trapped in Loch Ness when it got closed off from the Atlantic Ocean.
- _____ 2. People have been trying to determine for hundreds of years whether there really is a Loch Ness monster, and there is some evidence for its existence.
- _____ 3. The question of whether or not a monster really exists in Loch Ness has fascinated people for a very long time.

_____ Score 15 points for a correct M answer.

_____ Score 5 points for each correct B or N answer.

_____ **Total Score: Finding the Main Idea**

B Recalling Facts

How well do you remember the facts in the article? Put an X in the box next to the answer that correctly completes each statement about the article.

1. Saint Columba had gone to the Highlands of Scotland to
 - ☐ a. attend the funeral of a man killed by Nessie.
 - ☐ b. convert the Scots to Christianity.
 - ☐ c. fish in the waters of Loch Ness.
2. The fish in Loch Ness
 - ☐ a. were trapped in it when the lake was cut off from the ocean.
 - ☐ b. come in on the rivers that flow into the loch.
 - ☐ c. have died out since the roadway alongside the loch opened in 1933.
3. Mrs. Spicer, who saw Nessie crossing the road in broad daylight, said the monster resembled
 - ☐ a. a snake.
 - ☐ b. the surgeon's photo.
 - ☐ c. a giant snail.
4. The most famous picture of Nessie was taken
 - ☐ a. by a doctor.
 - ☐ b. with sonar.
 - ☐ c. from a mini-submarine.
5. Some scientists think that Nessie may be some sort of
 - ☐ a. brontosaurus.
 - ☐ b. pachyderm.
 - ☐ c. plesiosaur.

Score 5 points for each correct answer.

____ Total Score: Recalling Facts

C Making Inferences

When you combine your own experience and information from a text to draw a conclusion that is not directly stated in that text, you are making an inference. Below are five statements that may or may not be inferences based on information in the article. Label the statements using the following key:

C—Correct Inference**F—Faulty Inference**

- _____ 1. Saint Columba was made a saint because of the miraculous way in which he handled Nessie.
- _____ 2. People are still watching for proof of Nessie's existence.
- _____ 3. Nessie enjoys the attention of the people who visit Loch Ness to look for her.
- _____ 4. There may still be creatures living on the earth that no one knows anything about.
- _____ 5. Nessie herself is thought to have swum into the loch in some past age.

Score 5 points for each correct answer.

_____ **Total Score: Making Inferences**

D Using Words Precisely

Each numbered sentence below contains an underlined word or phrase from the article. Following the sentence are three definitions. One definition is closest to the meaning of the underlined word. One definition is opposite or nearly opposite. Label those two definitions using the following key. Do not label the remaining definition.

C—Closest**O—Opposite or Nearly Opposite**

1. People find Nessie so intriguing that thousands of tourists journey to the Highlands of Scotland each year in hopes of seeing her.
- _____ a. shy
- _____ b. fascinating
- _____ c. uninteresting
2. The dead person, he was told, had been killed by the savage bite of a creature living in the lake.
- _____ a. tender
- _____ b. vicious
- _____ c. accidental
3. With a menacing roar, Nessie swam straight for the poor servant.
- _____ a. reassuring
- _____ b. echoing
- _____ c. threatening
4. After her meeting with Saint Columba, Nessie retreated into the depths of Loch Ness.
- _____ a. withdrew
- _____ b. moved forward
- _____ c. drowned

5. While the size of Loch Ness hinders observers, it is ideal for Nessie.

- _____ a. helps
 _____ b. terrifies
 _____ c. makes things difficult for

_____ Score 3 points for each correct C answer.

_____ Score 2 points for each correct O answer.

_____ **Total Score: Using Words Precisely**

Enter the four total scores in the spaces below, and add them together to find your Reading Comprehension Score. Then record your score on the graph on.

Score Question Type

_____ Finding the Main Idea

_____ Recalling Facts

_____ Making Inferences

_____ Using Words Precisely

_____ **Reading Comprehension Score**

Author's Approach

Put an X in the box next to the correct answer.

1. The author probably wrote this article in order to
 - ☐ a. convince the reader that Nessie exists.
 - ☐ b. convince the reader that Nessie doesn't exist.
 - ☐ c. tell the reader about the monster that may be living in Loch Ness.
2. How is the author's purpose for writing the article expressed in paragraph 13?
 - ☐ a. The author informs the reader about Nessie's possible relation to the plesiosaurs.
 - ☐ b. The author claims that Nessie is a descendant of the plesiosaurs.
 - ☐ c. The author points out that the idea of a fish-eating monster is ridiculous.
3. Choose the statement below that best explains how the author addresses the opposing point of view in the article.
 - ☐ a. To convince those who doubt that Nessie is real, the author cites eyewitness evidence and the results of sonar tests in Loch Ness.

- ☐ b. To convince those who doubt that Nessie is real, the author refers to scientists who believe that the creatures in the photographs are seals or otters.
- ☐ c. To convince those who doubt that Nessie is real, the author relates a legend involving Saint Columba and the monster.

_____ Number of correct answers

Record your personal assessment of your work on the Critical Thinking Chart on.

Summarizing and Paraphrasing

Follow the directions provided for questions 1 and 2. Put an X in the box next to the correct answer for question 3.

1. Look for the important ideas and events in paragraphs 2 and 3. Summarize those paragraphs in one or two sentences.

2. Reread paragraph 7 in the article. Below, write a summary of the paragraph in no more than 25 words.

Reread your summary and decide whether it covers the important ideas in the paragraph. Next, decide how to shorten the summary to 15 words or less without leaving out any essential information. Write this summary below.

3. Choose the sentence that correctly restates the following sentence from the article:

“While many people have tried to capture proof of Nessie with a camera (and a number have succeeded in getting pictures much like the surgeon’s photo), others have used more complex equipment.”

- ☐ a. Although many people have tried to capture Nessie, most have just been able to take pictures of her.
- ☐ b. While some people have taken pictures of Nessie, others have used more complicated equipment to prove that she exists.

- ☐ c. While many people have taken pictures of the surgeon's photo, others have used more complicated equipment to prove Nessie's existence.

_____ Number of correct answers

Record your personal assessment of your work on the Critical Thinking Chart on.

Critical Thinking

Put an X in the box next to the correct answer for questions 1 and 2. Follow the directions provided for the other questions.

1. Which of the following statements from the article is an opinion rather than a fact?
 - ☐ a. "Sonar is a device used to locate underwater objects by bouncing sound waves off them."
 - ☐ b. "[Plesiosaurs] lived in the oceans 65 to 70 million years ago."
 - ☐ c. "It [the monster] was simply horrible."
2. From what the article told about Nessie and the tourists who come to see her, you can predict that
 - ☐ a. the monster will continue to hide from the tourists.
 - ☐ b. one day the monster will attack a tourist who tries to get too close to her.
 - ☐ c. a tourist will try to kill the monster.
3. Using what is told about Nessie and plesiosaurs in the article, name three ways Nessie is similar to and three ways Nessie is different from a plesiosaur. Cite the paragraph number(s) where you found details in the article to support your conclusions.

Similarities

Differences

4. Read paragraph 11. Then choose from the letters below to correctly complete the following statement. Write the letters on the lines.
 According to paragraph 11, _____ because _____.
 - a. the water of Loch Ness is very dark and murky
 - b. the water temperature in Loch Ness is only 42 degrees Fahrenheit
 - c. Nessie is hard to see

_____ Number of correct answers

Record your personal assessment of your work on the Critical Thinking Chart on.

Personal Response

This article is different from other articles about monsters I've read because

and Nessie is unlike other monsters because

Self-Assessment

Which concepts or ideas from the article were difficult to understand?

Which were easy to understand?
