

## Nonfiction Reading Test

### Mad Hatters

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

A hatter is a person who makes hats. Hatters are also known as milliners. People have been wearing hats for a long time. So, *millinery* is an old profession. We can trace the use of the word back to the 1600s.



Perhaps the most famous real-life milliner is Coco Chanel. She founded the Chanel brand after World War I. Her brand is still popular today. But the most famous milliner of all may be the Hatter from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

The Hatter first appears in Lewis Carroll's 1865 novel in "Chapter Seven – A Mad Tea-Party". The Hatter claims to Alice that it is always six o'clock and so it is always tea-time. He speaks in riddles to which he does not know the answer. And he changes his seat at the table at random. This character is known as "the Mad Hatter," and even the Cheshire Cat calls him mad.

In Carroll's time, many hatters suffered from mental illness. In fact, the phrase "as mad as a hatter" was in print in 1829. This was several decades before Carroll's character appeared. It is now understood that this madness was due to mercury exposure.

Mercury was once a secret ingredient in hatting. Hatters would steam and press animal fur. Then they would add a compound made from mercury to stabilize the fur. They called this process felting. It made for some nice hats. It also gave hatters mercury poisoning.

Erethism, also known as "mad hatter disease," is a mental disorder. It is due to having too much contact with mercury. Those who

suffer from it shake beyond their control. Their personalities may change. They may lose their memories. Or they may hallucinate. It is a damaging condition.

Speaking of madness, the small city of Danbury, Connecticut, was once known as "Hat City." During the 1800s and 1900s, as many as 75% of American-made hats came from Danbury. And a lot of workers from this city got mercury poisoning. There were so many cases that the condition was known as the "Danbury shakes." The madness of it all is that people knew the cause.

Although the hazards of mercury had long been known, it wasn't studied until the 1860s. Yet by 1869 science proved the health hazards that mercury posed to hat makers. And in 1874 and 1888 people created new, safer methods of felting using acid. But the American hat industry continued to use mercury for another 60 years. Isn't that maddening?

The use of mercury in hatting finally ended during World War II. It wasn't because people discovered that it was hazardous to workers. (They already knew that.) It was because mercury was needed to create detonators for the war effort. Connecticut banned the use of mercury in hat-making in 1941. To this day the banks of the Still River in Danbury still test high for levels of mercury waste.

1. Based on the context in the first paragraph, what does the word *millinery* mean?
  - a. Wearing hats
  - b. Modeling hats
  - c. Buying hats
  - d. Making hats
  
2. Which best explains why the author discusses Coco Chanel in the second paragraph?
  - a. To convince readers that Chanel No. 5 is the best perfume
  - b. To inform readers about famous hatters
  - c. To introduce Coco Chanel, the main character of the story
  - d. To compare and contrast Coco Chanel with other famous hatters
  
3. Which of the following is **FALSE**?
  - a. The Hatter in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is known for his bizarre behavior.
  - b. The phrase "as mad as a hatter" was well-known before Lewis wrote his text.
  - c. Hatters often suffered from mental problems in Carrol's time.
  - d. Lewis Carrol was the first to print the expression "as mad as a hatter."
  
4. What causes erethism?
  - a. Too much time inhaling steam
  - b. Too much exposure to mercury
  - c. Too much exposure to animal fur
  - d. Too much time working in a factory
  
5. Which is **NOT** a symptom of "mad hatter disease"?
  - a. Inability to move one's legs
  - b. Memory loss
  - c. Hallucinations
  - d. Shaking uncontrollably
  
6. To what did the phrase "the Danbury shakes" refer?
  - a. Delicious milk-based desserts
  - b. An obsession with fashion
  - c. Mercury poisoning
  - d. A trendy new dance
  
7. Which **conclusion** about American hat manufacturers can be supported by text?
  - a. They were deeply concerned about the health of their workers.
  - b. They were unaware of the harms of mercury.
  - c. They did not care about the effects of harmful working conditions.
  - d. They worked rapidly to address problems in the workspace.
  
8. Why did American hat manufacturers stop using mercury in the felting process?
  - a. Mercury was needed to create weapons for the war.
  - b. A new, safer process for felting had recently been discovered.
  - c. They suddenly learned that mercury harmed the workers.
  - d. Lewis Carroll exposed the harms of mercury in his book.

Day 2 (1-10) Write answers on note book paper.





## Nonfiction Reading Test

### *The Dodo*

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

Many plants and animals went extinct due to human activity. Few are as well known as the dodo. What stories have you heard about the dodo? You may have heard that they were fat, slow, and stupid. You may have heard that humans hunted them to the point of extinction. Legends and folktales do not tell the whole story.

The only place the dodo ever lived was the island of Mauritius (pronounced like "more-ish-us"). Mauritius is smaller than Rhode Island. It is off the coast of Madagascar, a much larger island east of Africa. There were no mammals on Mauritius before humans arrived. The dodo descended from pigeons that had flown to Mauritius. These pigeons found that this island had clean water and lots of fruit. Also, no predators lived there. They could relax and live in peace. Over millions of years, they evolved to become big and flightless. They became dodos.

Humans discovered Mauritius during the Age of Exploration. The Dutch colonized the island in 1638. They tried to farm and settle the land. They wanted to produce exports. They wanted the island to be more like their homes in the Netherlands. They brought pigs, chickens, cats, and other animals, even deer. They also brought the rats that hid on their ships.

The colonists hunted and ate many dodos. The birds had never faced predators. They were not stupid though. They learned to run from humans. They might have even adapted and survived, if it weren't for the other new mammals on Mauritius.



The cats and rats ate the dodos' eggs. Since dodos could not fly, they were unable to hide their eggs in trees like other birds. The new pigs, chickens, and livestock on the island now competed with the dodos for food. The dodos had to go deeper and deeper into the forests of Mauritius to survive. At the same time, the colonists were clearing the forests to make farmland. This total ecological attack was too much for these great birds.

The last recorded encounter with a dodo happened in 1662. A shipwrecked sailor wrote that he and his friends had caught a dodo. He said that the bird made a great noise and all the bird's friends ran to assist it. The men then captured them all. Truly this bird was too noble for this world.

No one noticed the extinction of the dodo when it happened. The concept didn't even exist at the time. The word "extinction" wouldn't even be used in that way for another 100 years. People just weren't aware of their impact on the environment. They didn't know about the delicate balance of life. In 1833, a study of the dodo helped to prove the concept of human-induced extinction.

To make things worse, the Dutch colonies failed. The Dutch abandoned Mauritius in 1710. Sadly, the dodo was not the only animal that was wiped out. It was only the most popular. Hundreds of plants and animals from Mauritius are now gone forever due to human activity.

Day 16 (a) Read the story / Summarize 5-7 sentences

1. Which statement is FALSE?
  - a) Mauritius had a lot of fruit trees in the past.
  - b) Mauritius is off the coast of Rhode Island.
  - c) Mauritius is a very small island.
  - d) Mauritius had no mammals on it for most of time.
  
2. Which bird is an ancestor of the dodo?
  - a) the penguin
  - b) the pigeon
  - c) the ostrich
  - d) the turkey
  
3. Which best explains WHY dodos lost the ability to fly?
  - a) The forest was so dense in Mauritius that birds couldn't fly.
  - b) Dodo wings adapted to swimming, like penguins.
  - c) The dodos had no predators on Mauritius.
  - d) Mauritius was too windy and flying there was dangerous.
  
4. Which best describes the author's purpose in writing the FOURTH paragraph?
  - a) He is explaining how and why the Dutch came to Mauritius.
  - b) He is describing what the Netherlands was like in the 1600s.
  - c) He is informing readers about how farms work and what they do.
  - d) He is persuading readers to learn more about history and geography.
  
5. Which event happened LAST?
  - a) The Dutch brought mammals to Mauritius.
  - b) A sailor had the last recorded encounter with a dodo.
  - c) The Dutch abandoned Mauritius.
  - d) The concept of human-induced extinction was proven.
  
6. Which was NOT a factor in the extinction of the dodo?
  - a) Pigs and chickens out-competed the dodo for food.
  - b) Cats and rats ate the dodos' eggs.
  - c) Humans cleared forestland to make farmland.
  - d) Pollution spoiled the dodos' ancient mating grounds.

Day 7 (1-5) Write <sup>answers</sup> on notebook paper

Day 8 (5-10) Write answers on notebook paper

7. How did people feel about the extinction of the dodo when it happened?

- a) Many people were really upset.
- b) Animal protection groups were formed.
- c) Most people didn't notice or care.
- d) Governments started preserving wildlife.

8. Which event happened FIRST?

- a) Humans discovered the island of Mauritius.
- b) The Dutch colonists left Mauritius.
- c) The last recorded encounter with a dodo occurred.
- d) A study of the dodo helped prove the concept of extinction.

9. Which statement is TRUE based on information from the text?

- a) Overhunting was the sole cause of the dodo's extinction.
- b) The Dutch colonies on Mauritius were a great success.
- c) The case of the dodo helped to prove the idea of extinction.
- d) The dodo was the only species extinguished by the colonists.

10. With which statement would the author most likely AGREE?

- a) Nature always bounces back no-matter how much damage we cause.
- b) Our actions can have severe, unintended effects on the environment.
- c) We should not explore the planet because it is too dangerous.
- d) It is arrogant to think that humans can permanently change the planet.

1. If the island of Mauritius were discovered today, would people treat the dodo and its habitat differently? Why or why not?

Day 9 Write answers on notebook paper

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2. What lesson can readers learn from this text? What can the dodo and the island of Mauritius teach readers about ecology and our environment? Refer to the text in your response.

July 10

Write answers on this back paper