



Pre-Reading Activities

A: Tell a Story

Work in small groups and answer the question below.

Do you know any folktales from your country about frightening creatures that live in the ocean, lakes or rivers and come out of the water to attack other animals or people?

If you do, share your story with your group.



B: Listening Gap Fill

Read the short text below about a creature called the snakehead fish. Try to predict what words go in each gap. Then listen as your teacher reads the text aloud. Fill the gaps with the missing words. (There may be two or three words in each gap.)

WASHINGTON Wed July 24 (Reuters) The freshwater snakehead **1.**_____ a voracious appetite, often consuming all other fish in a lake or pond and even eating its young. It can slither across land, staying out of water for up to three days, to **2.**_____ new sources of food.

Snakeheads can **3.**_____ any small animal in its path and reproduce quickly. They have even **4.**_____ people in China **5.**_____ too close to snakeheads' eggnesting areas. They **6.**_____ to Africa. The fish's natural habitat **7.**_____ freshwater lakes, ponds and rivers in Asia and Africa.

Thankfully, they have natural predators: smaller snakeheads are **8.**_____ by bigger fish, while the full-grown, 3-foot (one meter) snakehead **9.**_____ crocodiles and alligators.

Reading Activities

A: Writing Questions

Here are some answers for **Part One** of today's article. Read the answers and then quickly read **Part One**. Write a question for each answer.

1. *(You write the question...)* _____
Answer: It has been nicknamed the "FrankenFish".
2. **Question:** _____
Answer: Because of its ugliness and science-fiction features.
3. **Question:** _____
Answer: In a pond behind a shopping center in Crofton, Maryland, outside Washington DC.
4. **Question:** _____
Answer: She said it was "something from a bad horror movie."
5. **Question:** _____
Answer: It plans to ban the trade and importation of the fish.
6. **Question:** _____
Answer: It has made the pond in Crofton, Maryland famous.



Snakeheads Put Small Maryland Pond on World Map

BY TOM DOGGETT

CROFTON, Maryland Fri August 16 (Reuters) - The vegetation grows thick in this dark-watered pond, hiding all that swims beneath. It could double as the set for the 1950s movie classic "Creature from the Black Lagoon." In a way it does, for the dreaded land-crawling, all-eating snakehead fish lives here. Nicknamed the "FrankenFish" because of its ugliness and science-fiction **features**, snakeheads have become a heavily **hyped** story in the media this summer after two of the fish were caught in a pond behind a shopping center in Crofton, Maryland, outside Washington.

The predatory fish, which can slither across land for several days in search of food, was described as "something from a bad horror movie" by Interior Secretary Gale Norton when she announced the government's plans to ban imports and trade of snakeheads.

About two dozen states are not waiting for Washington to act, and are prohibiting possession of the fish or have already done so. (Continued/...)

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Glossary: **features** - characteristics **hyped** - something stirs up feeling and excitement

B: Reading for Detail

Here is a short text about the snakehead fish, but some of the information is incorrect. Read **Part One and Two** of today's article carefully and find the mistakes in the text.

The snakehead fish can crawl across land for six days at a time to look for food. Although its natural home is in Asia, it has been found in six American states. It lives in saltwater and breeds quickly. It can grow up to three feet (one meter) in width. Its head looks like that of a snake. Its wide mouth allows it to swallow creatures as big as itself. It is feared that it could destroy populations of local fish because of its small appetite. In Asia it is considered a delicacy.

Part Two

(Continued/...) Normally at home in the rivers and lakes of Asia where they are a delicacy, snakeheads found their way into the Maryland pond two years ago when a local resident bought the fish from a live seafood market in New York to make soup for a sick relative.

The soup was never made and the man dumped the **voracious** fish into the Crofton pond, where they bred rapidly. About 100 baby snakeheads were later found in the pond.

The fear is that there may be many more of the creatures that could easily crawl to a nearby river and several ponds, **decimating** the local fish population in the state's waterways.

THRILL SEEKERS

A Dunkin Donuts pastry shop at the shopping center next to the snakehead swamp is the frequent stop for thrill seekers asking for directions to the pond in the hope of spotting the notorious fish.

There have been plenty of people looking.

"I would like to know where that pond is," said local resident Mary Jo Sierco, who stopped at the doughnut shop recently with her husband Mike. Sierco wants to see the pond, located about 300 feet behind the doughnut store, before state officials carry out their plan to spray poison to kill the fish.

She believes the fish story has been **sensationalized**, partly because of the "snakehead" name.

"You know that kind of grabs you as something you don't like and you want to get rid of," she said.

Maryland wildlife officials could not agree more, and have come up with a complex plan to **eradicate** the snakeheads.

Due to the pond's thick layer of lily pads, the state wants to

first spray herbicides to kill the plant life and cut off oxygen to the snakeheads and other fish.

Once the plants are dead, a pesticide will be added to kill any remaining fish, according to Maryland game officials' plan for ending the summer horror show. All the other fish in the pond will die in the process.

The state has promised to then rake the pond for dead fish on a daily basis to control the odor.

The state will begin spraying its poison **elixir** on Sunday after reaching an agreement with the owners of the shopping center and the pond, who were worried they would be held **liable** for any lingering environmental problems. Draining the pond would have run the risk of pumping water that possibly contained some of the infant snakeheads into the Little Patuxent River just 250 feet away.

Other options rejected by the state were large scale netting and shocking the pond with electricity.

NO FRIENDS

The snakeheads appear to have no friends.

Even the animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) said it favors killing the snakeheads, though it prefers a more humane method instead of the state's broad poison plan.

Snakeheads have been found in six other states: Hawaii, Florida, California, Maine, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, according to the Interior Department. The fish has primarily been imported to the United States for its excellent taste, even when eaten smoked or dried.

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Glossary: **voracious** - eating much; greedy when eating **decimating** - destroying a large part of **sensationalized** - something has been exaggerated to make it seem more shocking than it really is **eradicate** - to destroy completely **elixir** - liquid remedy **liable** - legally responsible

C: Complete the Dialogue

Here is an fictitious television interview with one of the Maryland wildlife officials given the job of killing the snakehead fish.

Read it and complete the gaps in the interview with information from the article. Do not copy directly from the article. You can use your own ideas as well.

Interviewer: *I'm standing by a pond in Crofton, Maryland. Covered with lily pads it may look ordinary, but once you know what's in it, you might see it as the perfect setting for a science fiction movie. This pond contains the dreaded snakehead fish, also known as the FrankenFish. I have with me Dr Mary Smith, a biologist, working with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to eradicate the snakehead fish that has been found here in Crofton. Dr Smith, why is this fish nicknamed the FrankenFish?*

Dr Smith: *Well Emma, that's because of its appearance. It's also aggressive, so people are frightened of it.*

Interviewer: *So are we right to be frightened of it?*

Dr Smith: *We're really concerned that it could decimate populations of local fish. It reproduces rapidly and has a voracious appetite. If it gets into our waterways here, we could see a massive explosion of snakeheads (you continue...) 1. _____.*

Interviewer: *So what is the Department going to do to try and get rid of the fish in this pond?*

Dr Smith: *We want to remove it completely. We've looked at different methods like*

2. _____ *but have concluded that the best way will be*

3. _____. *The herbicide will kill 4. _____ in the pond so that the snakehead won't 5. _____.*

Interviewer: *That's a pretty drastic method.*

Dr Smith: *Yes, but 6. _____. And remember this fish can get out of the pond any time it wants to. It can crawl for several days to reach other food sources. We have to act quickly and make sure we deal with it effectively.*

Interviewer: *What effect will this have on the environment?*

Dr Smith: *Well, 7. _____ will die. The plant life will also die. Locals were concerned about the odor but we'll come in and 8. _____ to control the smell.*

Interviewer: *How did the snakehead get into the pond in the first place?*

Dr Smith: *A resident of the area bought some of the fish from 9. _____ to make soup. Unfortunately, that soup was never made and the fish were 10. _____. They bred and now we're dealing with the result.*

Interviewer: *Thank you for your time, Dr Smith. I understand the snakehead is good to eat. Have you tried it?*

Dr Smith: **11.** _____.

Interviewer: *This is Emma Black for WXT23. Back to the studio.*

D: Thinking Carefully

Read the article again and discuss the answers to these questions with a partner.

How might the groups listed below feel about the plan to destroy the snakehead fish? Do you think they **support** it or **oppose** it? Why do you think this? (Use evidence from the article and your own ideas.)

1. shop owners at the shopping center next to the snakehead fish pond
2. PETA
3. recreational fishers
4. people living in Crofton



Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

A: Dialogue

Work in pairs and read the dialogue from **Reading Activity C** together. Think about what you are saying and focus on **stress** and **intonation**.

B: Language

Non-defining relative clauses are clauses in sentences that give extra information about a person or thing. They begin with **relative pronouns** (*who, whom, whose, which*) that refer to the person or thing previously mentioned. These clauses use commas. Look at the following example.

*These snakehead fish, **which** are native to Asia, were dumped into a pond in Maryland, USA.*

- i. What does the pronoun **which** refer to?
- ii. What is the non-defining relative clause?

The following sentences are from today's article, but the **non-defining relative clauses** are missing. Use your understanding of the article to fill in the missing clauses.

Note: *The clauses do not need to be exactly the same as the article.*

Do not look back at the article until you are finished.

- 1. *The freshwater fish, which, has an ugly wide mouth and heavy scales...*
- 2. *"I would like to know where that pond is," said local resident Mary Jo Sierco,*
- 3. *The predatory fish,, was described as "something from a bad horror movie"...*

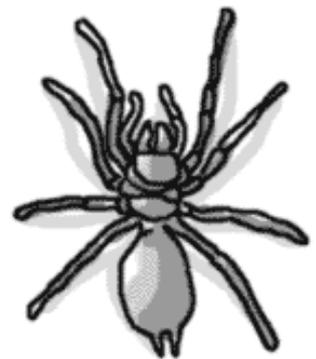


Now imagine a 'predatory' monster of your own and write 3 sentences describing it using non-defining relative clauses.

- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

C: Write a Story

Write either a news report or a folktale about a different 'fearsome creature.' It may be based on a real creature or something from your imagination. After you have completed it, let other students read and enjoy your work.



TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

Please Note: This lesson also has further exercises for your students to do online at www.instantworkbook.com. To get a username and password for your students, click on the blue icon next to this lesson description in the teachers' room at www.english-to-go.com.

Pre-Reading Activities

B: Listening Cloze - Text to be Read Aloud to Students

WASHINGTON Wed July 24 (Reuters) The freshwater snakehead **has** a voracious appetite, often consuming all other fish in a lake or pond and even eating its young. It can slither across land, staying out of water for up to three days, to **find** new sources of food.

Snakeheads can **eat almost** any small animal in its path and reproduce quickly. They have even **attacked** people in China who got too close to snakeheads' egg-nesting areas. They **are also native** to Africa. The fish's natural habitat **is in** freshwater lakes, ponds and rivers in Asia and Africa.

Thankfully, they have natural predators: smaller snakeheads are **eaten** by bigger fish, while the full-grown, 3-foot (one meter) snakehead **is consumed by** crocodiles and alligators.

B: Listening Cloze - Answers

1. has, 2. find, 3. eat almost, 4. attacked, 5. too close, 6. are also native, 7. is in, 8. eaten, 9. is consumed by

Reading Activities

A: Writing Questions - Notes

Students shouldn't find the question formation part of this activity too difficult. You may like to set a time limit appropriate for the level of your class to encourage them to work quickly and focus only on the relevant pieces of information.

A: Writing Questions - Sample Answers

1. What nickname has the snakehead fish been given?
2. Why has it been given this nickname?
3. Where has it recently been discovered?
4. What did Interior Secretary Gale Norton describe the snakehead as?
5. What does the US Government plan to do?
6. What effect has the discovery of the snakehead fish had in Crofton?

B: Reading for Detail - Notes

This is a more challenging activity: students are now dealing with the whole article and must look for the appropriate information so that they can compare it with the short text. They should be well-prepared for it having completed **Pre-Reading Activity A**. You may like students to pool their answers or work together to complete the whole activity.

B: Reading for Detail - Answers

(Correct information shown in italics)
... land for **six** days (*several days*) ... found in **six** American states (*seven: Hawaii, Florida, California, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Maryland*). It lives in **saltwater** (*freshwater*) ... up to three feet (one meter) in **width** (*length*) ... because of its **small** appetite (*voracious appetite*).

C: Complete the Dialogue - Notes

Students complete the lines of dialogue with information from the article. They will also use their own ideas. If they copy directly from the article, they will run into problems with grammatical structures, so warn them to take care to change the grammar.

With weaker students, you may like to ask them to locate the pieces of information on their own and then either 1. work in pairs to fill the gaps; or 2. work together as a class to fill the gaps. You could put the dialogue onto an OHP and then take suggestions from students before writing a correct version. It is important that students finish the activity with a complete and correct version of the dialogue as they will use this in **Post-Reading Activity A**.

C: Complete the Dialogue - Sample Answer

1. **and the decimation of the local fish population.**
2. **netting or draining the pond**
3. **to spray the pond with herbicide and then pesticide.**
4. **all the plants growing**
5. **have enough oxygen.**
6. **this is a really serious problem.**
7. **any fish living in the pond**
8. **rake the pond each day for dead fish**
9. **a seafood market in New York**
10. **dumped in the pond.**
11. **Yes, I've heard that too but I can't say I have. Thanks.**

D: Thinking Carefully - Suggested Answers

1. The article suggests that the owners of the shopping center and the pond were concerned about liability for any environmental problems that might result from the spraying. They would probably be concerned about the odor of dying fish as this could be a threat to their trade (i.e. people might be reluctant to shop at the center because of the smell). It's possible that there will be a decline in business as a result from the spraying as 'thrillseekers' stop coming to look for the pond and the snakehead. ("A Dunkin Donuts pastry shop at the shopping center next to the snakehead swamp is the frequent stop for thrill seekers asking for directions to the pond in the hope of spotting the notorious fish. There have been plenty of people looking.")
2. PETA supports the plan to destroy the fish, but would prefer a more 'humane' method to be used.
3. The article makes no mention of this group, but as the consequence of the snakehead getting into the state's waterways would mean the decimation of the "local fish population," it can be surmised that they would support the plan to destroy the fish (apart from any fishers who looked forward to catching and eating the snakehead).
4. There is no information given about this group in the article (apart from one reference to a resident who wants to see the fish before they are destroyed). However, the article talks of the FrankenFish and how it is 'dreaded.' From this, it might be concluded that most people living in Crofton would be pleased to see the fish exterminated because of its fearsome reputation. Some may be sorry that Crofton will no longer be in the news and may have enjoyed the publicity ("...Crofton's snakeheads have been splashed across major US and international newspapers and cable television news channels,...").

Post-Reading Activities

B: Language - Notes

Remind students that this is a grammar activity not a comprehension activity, therefore, they don't need to write the clauses exactly as they are written in the article. Circulate and see that students are using appropriate relative pronouns and forming grammatically correct relative clauses.

B: Language - Suggested Answers

- i. the snakehead fish
 - ii. which are native to Asia
1. The freshwater fish, **which can grow up to three feet long (one meter)**, has an ugly wide mouth and heavy scales...
 2. "I would like to know where that pond is," said local resident Mary Jo Sierco, **who stopped at the doughnut shop recently with her husband Mike**.
 3. The predatory fish, **which can slither across land for several days in search of food**, was described as "something from a bad horror movie"...
 4. - 6. Answers will vary.

Please Note: For pictures of the snakehead and information about the spraying program, students can look at the website of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Service. The address is: <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/fisheries/fishingreport/snakehead.html>