

Reading Comprehension 17- Passage
Grade 5

The Great Emu War – When Birds Outwitted Soldiers!

In 1932, Australia faced an unexpected invasion. But this was no ordinary attack—it wasn't led by another country or even by humans. Instead, the **invaders** were none other than thousands of large, flightless birds called **emus**!

After World War I, many Australian soldiers had returned home and were given land to farm. However, their troubles were far from over. The country was struggling economically, and to make matters worse, an army of **over 20,000 emus** descended upon their wheat fields. The birds, standing up to six feet tall, devoured crops at an alarming rate, leaving the farmers in despair.

Desperate for a solution, the farmers pleaded with the government for assistance. The officials devised an unusual strategy—they sent in a group of **heavily armed soldiers** with machine guns, convinced that this would swiftly end the emu problem.

Yet, what seemed like a simple operation turned into a **comedic disaster**. The emus proved to be **remarkably intelligent and agile**. Instead of scattering randomly, they sprinted in organized groups, **executing evasive maneuvers** that left the soldiers bewildered. Their long, powerful legs allowed them to dart away at astonishing speeds, and their unpredictable zigzagging patterns made them nearly impossible to hit.

One soldier humorously remarked, "**These birds are better at strategy than we are!**" Despite firing thousands of bullets, the soldiers managed to eliminate only a handful of emus, while the rest continued to feast on the crops.

The "war" lasted for weeks, but in the end, the Australian government admitted defeat. The emus had triumphed. The soldiers withdrew, and farmers were forced to construct **extensive fencing systems** to protect their fields.

Though the Great Emu War was a colossal failure for humans, it remains one of the most **bizarre and amusing** episodes in history, proving that sometimes, nature has the upper hand!

Comprehension-Based Questions

1. What led to the Great Emu War, and why did farmers seek help from the government?
 2. How did the government respond to the emu invasion, and why did their plan fail?
 3. What made the emus so difficult to defeat? Give two reasons.
 4. Explain the phrase "**executing evasive maneuvers**" in your own words.
 5. Find a sentence from the passage that suggests humor.
 6. If you were advising the government back then, what alternative method would you have suggested to control the emu problem?
 7. Why do you think this event is considered **both bizarre and amusing**?
-

Vocabulary-Based Questions

1. Find a synonym for "**huge**" in the passage.
 2. What does the word "**devoured**" mean in the passage?
 - a) Looked at carefully
 - b) Ate greedily
 - c) Walked past
 - d) Chased away
 3. Identify a word in the passage that means "**strange or unusual in an interesting way.**"
 4. Use the word "**desperate**" in a sentence that reflects its meaning in the passage.
 5. What is the opposite of "**triumph**"?
-

Grammar-Based Questions

1. Find a **collective noun** in the passage.
2. Identify two **past tense verbs** in the passage.
3. Convert the following sentence into present perfect tense:
 - o "The soldiers withdrew, and farmers were forced to construct fencing."
4. Find the **adverb** in this sentence:

- "The emus sprinted in organized groups, executing evasive maneuvers cleverly."

5. Rewrite this sentence in passive voice:

- "The soldiers fired thousands of bullets at the emus."
-

Practice **N** Learn.com

Answer Key

Comprehension-Based Answers

1. The Great Emu War began because thousands of emus invaded Australian farms, destroying wheat crops. Farmers, unable to protect their fields, sought government assistance.
2. The government sent armed soldiers to eliminate the emus, believing it would be an easy task. However, their plan failed because the birds were too fast and intelligent, dodging bullets and escaping in groups.
3. The emus were difficult to defeat because:
 - They ran in **organized groups**, making them harder to target.
 - Their **zigzag movements** made it difficult for soldiers to aim accurately.
4. **"Executing evasive maneuvers"** means moving strategically to avoid being caught or harmed, similar to how a skilled athlete dodges an opponent.
5. **"These birds are better at strategy than we are!"**
6. *(Open-ended; acceptable answers may include humane methods like building fences earlier, using alternative deterrents, or relocating the emus.)*
7. It is bizarre because a country used machine guns against birds, and amusing because the birds outsmarted trained soldiers!

Vocabulary-Based Answers

1. **Huge = colossal**
2. **b) Ate greedily**
3. **Bizarre**
4. *(Example sentence)* The farmers were desperate to find a way to stop the emus from destroying their fields.
5. **Failure**

Grammar-Based Answers

1. **Collective noun: Army (of emus)**
2. **Past tense verbs: descended, withdrew**

3. **Present perfect tense:** "The soldiers have withdrawn, and farmers have been forced to construct fencing."
 4. **Adverb:** cleverly
 5. **Passive voice:** "Thousands of bullets were fired at the emus by the soldiers."
-

PracticeNLearn.com