

Nonfiction Reading Test

The Dodo

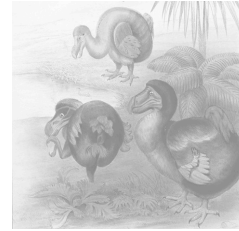
Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

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.

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.

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?
