



## Practice Task: INVASIVE PLANTS



### PART 1: RESEARCH

(approx. 60-90 mins)

#### Student Directions:

##### Your assignment:

A local newspaper is publishing student essays about important environmental topics. You are invited to submit an essay about invasive plants, which have become a serious problem in your area. Your essay will be based on the research you conduct.

##### Steps you will be following:

To plan and compose your essay, you will do all the following:

1. Watch a video, read a fact sheet and a blog entry.
2. Answer three questions about the sources.
3. Plan and write your essay.

##### Directions for beginning:

You will now read two sources, a fact sheet, and a blog, and watch a video about invasive plants. Take notes because you may want to refer to your notes while writing your essay. You can refer to any of the sources as often as you like.

##### Sources

Source 1: Video: Untamed Science, *Weeds of Mass Destruction* (3:08)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0Nk9EJpQWU>

Source 2: Fact Sheet on Invasive Plants

Source 3: Blog Entry – Our Great Garden Invasion



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## NOTE TAKING

	Source 1 Video	Source 2 Fact Sheet	Source 3 Blog Entry
What invasive plants are			
Why people should be concerned			
Why people might not want to get rid of invasive plants			



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### Source #2: Fact Sheet

#### INVASIVE PLANT FACT SHEET

*The following information is taken from the website of the United States Department of Agriculture.*

##### Numbers of invasive plant species:

- 1,500 species of plants known as “weeds” of foreign origin currently found in U.S.
- From 1,000 to over 22, 000 species of potentially invasive plants that have yet to be introduced into the U.S.

##### Characteristics of invasive plants:

- Rapid growth and short life cycle – may go from being a seed to producing seeds within three-week span
- Most are flowering plants
- Able to grow in many habitats
- Resistant to animal grazing
- Seeds are spread easily
- New plants are created by many different methods, including seeds, runners, and cuttings
- If reproducing by seed, insects, birds, bats, or other pollinators quickly spread the seeds over a wide area
- Few natural diseases to stop growth

##### Common consequences of invasive plant invasion:

- Risk of fire increased
- Major, costly cleanup efforts by government agencies
- Kills or damages many native plants
- Damage to pavement and buildings
- Uprooting of trees
- Damage to or destruction of nesting sites for various animal species
- Damage to crops; reduced crop production

##### How to control invasive plant species:

- Best control is preventing them from spreading
- Biological control with the plant’s natural enemies
- Mechanical control (removal from ground)
- Chemical control (herbicides)



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### Source #3: Blog Entry

#### OUR GREAT GARDEN INVASION

*The following passage is a blog entry written by a dedicated gardener.*

Talk about poor timing. My wife and I took a one-month trip out of the U.S. just at the end of winter. We have a spacious backyard with several large flowerbeds, so we figured we would come back home to a beautiful selection of flowers and plants in full bloom, plus a few weeds, of course. Instead, we returned to find our garden overgrown with exotic species we'd never seen before and most of our best plants dead or dying. Must be weeds, we thought, though not the usual ugly and scary looking types of weeds. We even considered leaving some of our new plants in the ground, and my wife wanted to collect samples of the seeds so we could plant them in the future. Many gardeners don't seem to mind the new arrivals. But, as we soon discovered, these were not weeds at all but members of several nasty invasive plant species! After reading information about these pests, we knew that saving any seeds was out of the question.

Of course, I'd heard about invasive plants before, but I always thought that just meant something like "ugly weeds." I had never taken time to study the matter. There are many types of invasive species. They have pleasant names like Chinese Wisteria, Bush Honeysuckle, Bamboo, English Ivy, Autumn Olive, and Brazilian Pepper Tree. But what they did to our garden wasn't pleasant at all. They took over many of the spaces where our favorite plants used to be, blocked sunlight (because they covered so much of the ground), and even climbed up the sides of our back deck and major portions of our fence.

How did these non-native species invade the garden? They certainly weren't there the year before. Maybe those nice bird feeders we started leaving out this year were not such a great idea. Birds and other animals often carry the seeds of invasive species from a long way away. They drop a few seeds in the garden in late winter or early spring and the invasion begins. Also, it certainly didn't help that our neighbor buys plants at a garden center that we now know sells some invasive plants because of popular demand. These things grow fast, and with no one around to spot them or halt their growth, they can ruin a garden in no time (we're talking weeks).



**Creeping Buttercup**

Now I'm going to talk about the worst thing about invasive plants: removing them! The day after returning from our relaxing vacation, my wife and I spent the entire morning researching how to combat these plants, the entire afternoon at the hardware store and garden center buying the proper weapons, and all of the next day in a major battle. We tried burying the short ones, we coated others with oil, thought about setting some on fire (seemed a bit unsafe) and ended up just pulling most of them out by the roots or digging deep below ground with a shovel. By the end of the day, we had several large trash cans full of once beautiful plants.

As I've mentioned, some people actually like these invasive pests because they're unusual and beautiful. But unless your idea of beauty also involves getting bruises on your knees from digging in the ground all day and splinters from putting up a new fence, I would suggest that you learn to appreciate the many native plants that we have in this country, like buffalo grass, fir trees, and sunflowers.



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## Questions

Use your remaining time to answer the questions below. Your answers to these questions will be scored. Also, they will help you think about the sources you've read and viewed, which should help you write your essay. You may click on the appropriate buttons to refer to the sources when you think it would be helpful. You may also refer to your notes. Answer the questions in the spaces provided below them.

- 1. Explain what invasive plants are and why people should be concerned about them. Use details from the sources to support your answer. Cite your sources. (Claim 4, Target 2)

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2. Evaluate which source, the video or the fact sheet, would be most helpful to the blog writer. Use details from both sources to support your answer. Cite your sources. (*Claim 4, Target 3*)

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## Practice Task: **INVASIVE PLANTS**



### **PART 2: ESSAY**

(approx. 60-90 mins)

#### **Student Directions:**

**You will now have 60-90 minutes to review your notes and sources, plan, draft, and revise your essay. You may use your notes and refer to the sources. You may also refer to the answers you wrote to questions at the end of part 1, but you cannot change those answers. Now read your assignment and the information about how your essay will be scored, then begin your work.**

#### **Your assignment:**

A local newspaper is publishing student essays about important environmental topics. You are invited to submit an essay about invasive plants, which have become a serious problem in your state. Your essay should be informative and interesting to read, and it should give readers a basic introduction to the issue of invasive plants.

#### **How your essay will be scored:**

The people scoring your essay will be assigning scores for

- 1. *Statement of Purpose / Focus***– how well you clearly state and maintain your controlling idea or main idea
- 2. *Organization*** – how well the ideas progress from the introduction to the conclusion using effective transitions and how well you stay on topic throughout the essay
- 3. *Elaboration of Evidence***– how well you provide evidence from sources about your topic and elaborate with specific information
- 4. *Language and Vocabulary***– how well you effectively express ideas using precise language that is appropriate for your audience and purpose
- 5. *Conventions***– how well you follow the rules of usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling

#### **Now begin work on your essay.**

Manage your time carefully so that you can:

- Plan your essay
- Write your essay
- Revise and edit for a final draft





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### Planning My Essay

Essay Components
Introduction: Capture the reader's attention
Statement of purpose or controlling idea:
Support #1:
Support #2:
Support #3:
Conclusion:

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