

Name _____ Date _____ Hour _____

Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing QUIZ

1. Imagine your town is dealing with a bird poop problem. Write a paragraph explaining one way you can help solve the problem. Your paragraph should include:

- a topic sentence
- at least one direct quotation that you have LIFTED from the article and cited.
- a sentence that states how that evidence supports your central idea

2. Paraphrase each section of the article

You'll never look at a pigeon the same way again

Danger

Too Many Birds

How to Solve the Problem of Bird Poop

3. Write a summary using your paraphrases that would sum up the entire article

PAIRED TEXTS
stories that share a
topic or theme

The Great Bird Poop Disaster

You'll never look at a pigeon the same way again.

By Anna Starecheski

AS YOU READ

Why is bird poop a problem for humans?

Rome, Italy, was in chaos. Cars skidded off roads. Scooters crashed. Dozens of people were injured. The government urged people to stay inside. What had caused this crisis? Was it a terrible storm? A volcano? An earthquake?

In fact, the cause was bird poop. *Lots* of bird poop. Each year, small speckled birds called starlings pass through Rome as they migrate south to warmer climates.

In October 2015, the first birds arrived as usual—but they didn't leave. More kept coming, and by January, Rome was **besieged** by 4 million starlings. They screeched. They blackened the sky. But the real problem was their poop, which coated the ground, making streets and sidewalks dangerously slippery.

Rome is not the only city that has been **menaced** by bird poop. The pasty goo is a major headache



Last year, the city of Rome was smothered in bird poop.



for cities around the world, damaging **infrastructure** and endangering the health of those who have to clean it up.

How did this icky problem start, and what can be done about it?

Danger

Bird poop is different from that of many other animals. Unlike most animals, birds urinate and defecate at the same time—in one deposit. At the center of a bird dropping is a black substance; that is the poop. The white, gloppy stuff is the urine, which consists mainly of uric acid.

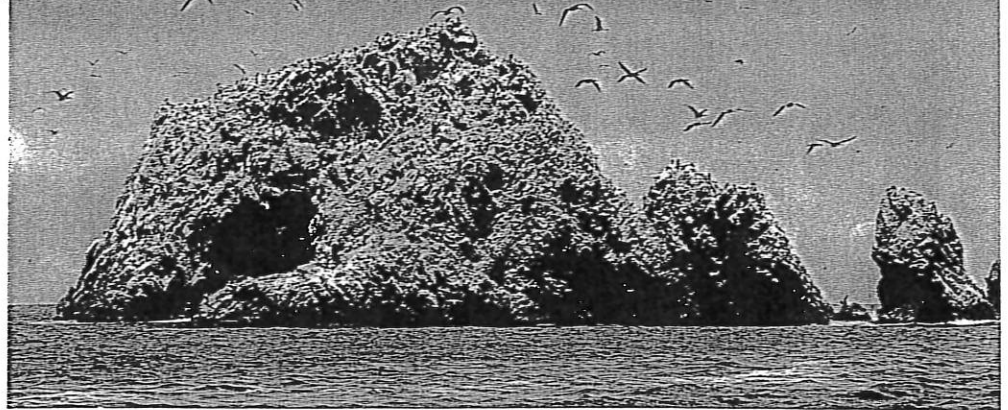
Uric acid is **corrosive**. That means it can eat away at the surfaces of buildings and bridges. Bird poop can also ruin everything from the paint on your mom's car to your favorite T-shirt.

In the U.S., pigeons alone cause about \$1.1 billion in damages every year. Bird poop has also caused disasters. For example, in 2011, part of the roof of a gas station in California collapsed due to the nearly 12 inches of pigeon poop that had **accumulated** there. Fortunately, no one was injured—but someone could have been.

Bird poop also creates unsanitary conditions. For workers who have to clean up large quantities of the stuff, it can cause health problems.

ISLAND OF POOP

For centuries, seabirds' poop, called guano, has been used around the world as a fertilizer. This photo shows a guano-covered island near Peru.



Too Many Birds

A little bird poop here and there is not a problem. But we're not talking about a little bird poop. We're talking about a **deluge** that falls on our streets, parks, offices, homes, and yes, sometimes our heads.

Why is there so much bird poop? Because our cities have been overrun by birds.

In New York City, for instance, the pigeon population has been estimated to be as high as 7 million birds. Each pigeon drops about 25 pounds of poop per year. Do the math and you'll come to the horrifying realization that as much as 175 million pounds of pigeon poop gets splattered across New York every year.

Pigeons—along with seagulls, starlings, and various other bird species—**thrive** in cities for several reasons. The birds don't have predators in cities as they do in the wild. They nest comfortably in buildings, on window ledges, and

on rooftops. And they get plenty to eat from our garbage and from people feeding them. In other words, humans have created a wonderful home for the birds. As a result, the birds have reproduced to the point of overpopulation.

Bird overpopulation isn't good for humans, and it isn't good for birds either. When a bird population gets too large, the birds are forced to live in crowded nests, where they can easily pass diseases to each other.

The good news is that if we are **diligent** about cleaning up bird poop, the damage—to us, at least—can be minimized. Promptly removing droppings helps prevent corrosion and stops the poop from piling up to hazardous weights.

To protect yourself after a gross surprise from above, use warm, soapy water to wash off any bird poop on your clothes or skin. And of course, if you find yourself in Rome when the starlings come to town, be sure to wear a hat. ●

How to Solve the Problem of Bird Poop



Around the world, cities are trying to deal with bird poop in all sorts of creative ways.

1 Bird-feeding bans

Feeding birds can be fun, but doing so encourages more birds to flock to feeding areas. Several cities that enforce bird-feeding bans have seen reductions in bird populations.

2 Hawk patrol

In a park in New York City, hawks were released to control the pigeon population. (Hawks like to snack on pigeons.) But after a hawk attacked a small dog, the program was abandoned. Other cities have tried a more humane approach: scaring off pigeons with robotic hawks. **Avian ecologist** Dr. Jean Tate explains that pigeons are too smart to be fooled though. "The birds just get used to the robots," she says.

3 Birdhouses

In Basel, Switzerland, a biologist named Dr. Daniel Haag-Wackernagel implemented something called dovecoting. A dovecote is a large structure full of compartments for birds to nest in. Thirteen dovecotes were placed around the city. Many pigeons chose to live in the dovecotes rather than in other



structures such as buildings. Any eggs laid in the dovecotes were replaced with fake eggs to help control breeding. At the same time, people were encouraged to stop feeding birds or to feed them only near the dovecotes. Within four years, the city's pigeon population had been reduced by half.

4 Bird-call sound systems

At one pigeon-infested New York City subway station, loudspeakers were installed to blare a series of bird distress and predator calls every few minutes. The calls signaled to pigeons that danger was near. Many pigeons were scared off, and workers were able to clean up much of the bird poop in the station. But not all the birds fled. (Maybe because some people continued to feed them?)



5 Spikes in bird-roosting areas

Placing spikes on window ledges, bridges, fences, and other areas where birds nest is an effective way to keep the birds away. According to Bird B Gone, a bird control company, spikes are both humane (they don't harm the birds) and cost-effective. One box of spikes is about \$35.

Writing Contest

Imagine that you notice a large amount of bird poop around your town. Write an essay explaining why this is a problem and proposing a solution. Explain why you think your solution would be successful. Send your essay to **Bird Contest**. Five winners will get *Moonbird* by Phillip Hoose.



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