



## Snake River Reading Comprehension

Grade Level: 5+ | Word Count: 237 | Lexile 900

The Snake River is one of the most important rivers in the western United States. Stretching more than 1,000 miles, it flows from the Rocky Mountains in Wyoming through Idaho, Oregon, and Washington before joining the Columbia River. Along the way, it carves deep canyons and provides water for farms, towns, and wildlife.

The river's name may have come from early explorers who saw Native American hand signs that looked like a snake moving. For many Native peoples, the river has always been a source of food, transportation, and culture. Salmon once traveled the Snake River in huge numbers to spawn in mountain streams. Today, dams and other changes have reduced their runs, but efforts continue to restore them.

The Snake River is famous for Hells Canyon, the deepest river gorge in North America. Here, the river has cut down more than a mile into solid rock. The canyon is deeper than the Grand Canyon in some places and draws visitors for rafting, fishing, and hiking. Powerful rapids challenge even experienced boaters.

In modern times, the Snake River helps generate electricity through dams that produce hydroelectric power. These dams also supply water for irrigation, turning dry lands into farmland. Still, balancing human needs with protecting fish and ecosystems remains an important challenge for the region.

Word Count: 233

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**1. What is the main purpose of the first paragraph?**

- A. To explain how salmon use the river
- B. To describe the river's length and path
- C. To compare the Snake River to the Columbia River
- D. To show how dams were built along the river

**2. What does the passage suggest about the river's name?**

- A. It came from the shape of the canyon.
- B. It was given by early explorers based on hand signs.
- C. It was named after snakes living near the water.
- D. It was first used by farmers along the river.

**3. Compare the Snake River's importance to Native peoples with its importance today. Which statement best reflects this comparison?**

- A. It was once important only for travel but is now used for farming.
- B. It has always provided resources, but the focus shifted from food and culture to power and irrigation.
- C. Native peoples ignored the river, but it is now vital for modern technology.
- D. The river was once only symbolic, but today it is essential for salmon.

**4. What inference can you make about the impact of dams on salmon?**

- A. Dams have helped salmon multiply quickly.
- B. Dams prevent salmon from returning to spawn as easily.
- C. Dams provide salmon with better habitats.
- D. Dams make salmon runs stronger than before.

**5. Which detail best supports the idea that the Snake River is a place for adventure?**

- A. "It flows from the Rocky Mountains in Wyoming."
- B. "Here, the river has cut down more than a mile into solid rock."
- C. "Powerful rapids challenge even experienced boaters."
- D. "These dams also supply water for irrigation."

**6. What is the central idea of the passage?**

- A. The Snake River is both a natural wonder and a resource, but using it responsibly is a challenge.
- B. The Snake River is only important for hydroelectric power.
- C. The Snake River has no major environmental problems.
- D. The Snake River is deeper than the Grand Canyon everywhere.

**7. Based on the passage, why is balancing human needs with protecting ecosystems difficult?**

- A. Because people cannot agree on the river's name
- B. Because farming and electricity use the same water that fish need
- C. Because there are too many rivers in the West
- D. Because Native peoples do not allow the river to be used

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# Answer Key

1. B – To describe the river’s length and path
2. B – It was given by early explorers based on hand signs
3. B – It has always provided resources, but the focus shifted from food and culture to power and irrigation
4. B – Dams prevent salmon from returning to spawn as easily
5. C – “Powerful rapids challenge even experienced boaters.”
6. A – The Snake River is both a natural wonder and a resource, but using it responsibly is a challenge
7. B – Because farming and electricity use the same water that fish need