



The California Gull Miracle in Utah Reading Comprehension

Word Count: 266 | Lexile 940

Every spring, many Utahns remember a story from 1848 that they call the “Miracle of the Gulls.” That year, the first Mormon settlers planted fields near the Great Salt Lake after a long, difficult journey to the valley. When warm weather arrived, enormous swarms of crickets appeared and began eating the young crops. The settlers feared they would lose their harvest and face hunger the next winter.

Then flocks of California gulls arrived from the lake. Witnesses reported that the white birds landed by the fields and began swallowing the crickets by the mouthful. According to the accounts, the gulls flew back to drink and then returned to feed again, repeating the cycle for hours. Over several days, the number of insects dropped, and enough crops survived to feed the community. Many settlers felt the timing was providential, and the event soon became part of local tradition.

Today, historians point out that gulls naturally eat insects and often gather where food is abundant. Whether one sees a miracle or an example of nature at work, the story reminds people that everyday species can have a powerful impact. In downtown Salt Lake City, a monument honors the California gull as the state bird, celebrating both the dramatic tale and the role of wildlife in human survival.

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1. **What threatened the settlers’ crops in 1848?**
 - A. Drought from the Great Salt Lake
 - B. Large swarms of crickets
 - C. Freezing spring temperatures
 - D. Flooding from mountain snowmelt

2. **How did the California gulls help the settlers?**
 - A. They ate the crickets that were destroying crops.
 - B. They carried water from the lake to the fields.
 - C. They warned settlers about storms.
 - D. They scared away other birds.

3. **Which sentence best states the central idea of the passage?**
- A. Utah settlers always had easy harvests.
 - B. California gulls only live near the ocean.
 - C. A dramatic event in 1848 showed how wildlife can shape human survival.
 - D. Crickets are more dangerous than drought.
4. **What is one explanation historians offer for the event?**
- A. The gulls were trained by settlers.
 - B. The crickets were already migrating away.
 - C. The settlers used hidden pesticides.
 - D. Gulls naturally eat insects where food is abundant.
5. **Why do many Utahns still remember the story today?**
- A. It explains how the Great Salt Lake was formed.
 - B. It is part of local tradition and is honored by a monument.
 - C. It proves that miracles cannot happen.
 - D. It led to the end of farming in Utah.
6. **Which detail shows the settlers' fear about the future?**
- A. They worried they would lose the harvest and face hunger.
 - B. They planted fields near the Great Salt Lake.
 - C. They built a monument to the gull.
 - D. They watched gulls drink water at the lake.
7. **Which statement is supported by the passage?**
- A. California gulls never leave the ocean coast.
 - B. The event has no connection to Utah's history.
 - C. The California gull is celebrated as Utah's state bird.
 - D. Crickets cannot damage crops in large numbers.
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Answer Sheet

1. **B** – Large swarms of crickets
2. **A** – They ate the crickets that were destroying crops.
3. **C** – A dramatic event in 1848 showed how wildlife can shape human survival.
4. **D** – Gulls naturally eat insects where food is abundant.
5. **B** – It is part of local tradition and is honored by a monument.
6. **A** – They worried they would lose the harvest and face hunger.
7. **C** – The California gull is celebrated as Utah's state bird.