

INVASIVE SPECIES OBITUARY PROJECT



Why use this activity?

I prefer this activity over the typical “wanted poster” activity because this requires students to really think about the impacts the invasive species has on the ecosystem, and possible ways to get rid of it. Students will examine community interactions of both surviving species and species that have died off due to the introduction of the non-native species.

Included in your purchase:

- Student handout with assignment directions
- Student brainstorming and research page
- Possible grading rubric for both options
 - Sample obituaries



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An **obituary** is a short news article that reports the death of a person. A typical obituary gives information about a person's life, surviving relatives, and information about the funeral services. Some obituaries will also note the cause of death. See a sample obituary below:

Georgetown — Sally Long, a long-time resident of the Georgetown area, died Wednesday the 18th of June at Sun Bridge Healthcare Center.

Born in 1928 in Madison, S.D., Sally received a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Education from South Dakota State College in 1951. She continued her education at the University of Minnesota, from which she received her M.Ed. in Nursing in 1955.

Sally taught Nursing at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in the mid-1960s and worked at various psychiatric nursing facilities throughout western Massachusetts in the 1970s. In a career shift, she took a position as a librarian assistant at Franklin County Technical School, Turners Falls, where she worked until her retirement.

Sally loved good food and socializing, enjoyed going to movies and plays with friends, and had a wonderful smile that could light up a room.

She is survived by her niece, Tabitha Winslow and several grandnieces, all of whom live in southern California, and brought great joy to her later years.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society, PO Box 319, South Deerfield, MA 01373.

The Douglass Funeral Service, Amherst, has been entrusted with arrangements.

Your assignment is to write an obituary notice linked to an invasive species. You have two options to choose from:

Option 1: Write an obituary for a species that has died off as the result of an invasive species that has moved into the area. Explain the life history of your organism (why it thrives in that specific environment, what it eats, it's impact on the ecosystem, etc.) Your article should explain specific ways the non-native species outcompeted the native species, and how the non-native species has impacted the ecosystem.

Option 2: Write an obituary for an invasive species that you have found a way to eliminate. Your article must explain the method used to exterminate the invasive species. The method chosen must have a minimal impact on other organisms in the area. For example, let's look at the Arizona Bullfrog. You cannot choose to poison all the ponds in Arizona in order to kill the bullfrogs, as this will also kill all the other organisms in the pond. Your method must be well thought out and be a viable solution to the problem.

EXAMPLES OF INVASIVE SPECIES TO CHOOSE FROM:

- Zebra mussels
- Asian carp
- Crayfish
- Feral pigs
- Green crab
- Kudzu
- Cane toad
- Buffelgrass
- Asian tiger mosquito
- Red fire ants
- Head over to your local game and fish website to find some local plant and animal invasive species!



*Note: if you are choosing option 1, choose an invasive species first and then research which organisms they have affected.

BRAINSTORMING AND RESEARCH

Which option have you chosen? _____

Which organism will you write about? _____

What is some background information about your organism?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

What are **specific** ways the invasive species have competed with native species? How have they affected the ecosystem?

Who might be some “surviving” relatives? (What other organisms in the community are still surviving?)

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



GRADING RUBRIC- OPTION 1

Element	✓ +	✓ -	-
Picture	Printed picture is included.	Picture included is a sketch.	Picture is missing or illegible.
Background information	Includes in depth background information about the invasive species and its role in the ecosystem.	Background information is present but lacking, and ecosystem interactions aren't explained.	Background information and ecosystem interactions are missing or very unclear.
Competition	Clearly explains how the invasive species competes with the native species, and how the invasive species has impacted the ecosystem.	Explains how the invasive species competes with native species but doesn't include specific examples. Role of the invasive species is lacking.	Explanation of competition between invasive and native species is missing. The role of the invasive species is missing or very unclear.
Organization and Grammar	Obituary is written in a very organized manner and is free of grammatical and spelling errors.	Obituary is organized and has few grammatical or spelling errors.	Obituary is not written clearly and has grammatical and spelling errors.

GRADING RUBRIC- OPTION 2

Element	✓ +	✓ -	-
Picture	Printed picture is included.	Picture included is a sketch.	Picture is missing or illegible.
Background information	Includes in depth background information about the native species and its role in the ecosystem.	Background information is present but lacking, and ecosystem interactions aren't explained.	Background information and ecosystem interactions are missing or very unclear.
Elimination Method	Explains a well thought out and viable method used to eliminate the invasive species. Also notes any impacts it might have on local species.	Includes a method used to eliminate the invasive species, although may have impacts on the native species in the area as well.	Method chosen to eliminate the invasive species is missing or a very poor option.
Organization and Grammar	Obituary is written in a very organized manner and is free of grammatical and spelling errors.	Obituary is organized and has few grammatical or spelling errors.	Obituary is not written clearly and has grammatical and spelling errors.

SAMPLE OBITUARY FOR OPTION 1:



Phoenix- The Chiricahua Leopard Frog, a long time Arizona resident, died on Sunday after a hard fought battle with the Bullfrog.

The Leopard Frog loved living in the Arizona desert. It could survive in the hot desert by burrowing underground for months at a time. It lived most of its life near waterways and fed on insects, spiders, and small lizards and fish. It was loved by community members as it kept insect populations in check. The Leopard frog was a good bio-indicator, letting us know that the local environment was healthy and thriving.

The cause of death of the Leopard Frog was a newcomer to the neighborhood, the Bullfrog. The Bullfrog came from the central and eastern part of the United States, and was brought to Arizona as a game species for people to hunt and eat. The Bullfrog quickly took over local ponds and waterways, and would eat anything that crossed its path, including its own offspring. It is larger than the Leopard frog, and can outcompete them for food and resources. It is now a local pest that is detrimental to the desert riparian ecosystem.

Funeral services will be held at Lake Pleasant Regional Park. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Arizona Game and Fish Department.

SAMPLE OBITUARY FOR OPTION 2:



Phoenix- The Bullfrog will finally be laid to rest after living a life of luxury in the Arizona Desert.

The Bullfrog was brought to Arizona from the eastern United States as a game species for people to hunt and eat. It quickly overtook ponds and became the envy of every local frog species. Bullfrogs can travel up to 8 miles in one season in search for new habitats. It can eat anything that crossed its path and can outcompete other frogs (such as the Leopard Frog) for food.

The Bullfrog finally met its match as local residents were awarded monetarily for killing and turning in female bullfrogs to the Arizona Game and Fish Department. Females are valuable as they can produce thousands of young per year. As females weren't able to reproduce and males had increased competition for mates, populations slowly declined. This method of elimination shouldn't have any negative impacts on other local species.

The Bullfrog is survived by the Chiricahua Leopard Frog, the Sonoran Green Toad, and the Sonoran Tiger Salamander. Funeral services will be held at Lake Pleasant Regional Park. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Arizona Game and Fish Department.