

LET'S GO BIRDWATCHING



LET'S GO BIRDING

Birdwatching has big mental health benefits. Here's how to start.

LEXILE: 1040L (890L alternate reading level)

SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS) STANDARD: People, Places, and Environments

COMMON CORE (CCSS) STANDARDS: RI.6-8.3, RI.6-8.4, RI.6-8.8, W.6-8.2

ENGAGE THE READER

Tell students that they will be reading an article about the mental-health benefits of birdwatching. Ask: What is birdwatching? What benefits do you think it could have on mental health, and why? Do you think experiencing nature can benefit someone's mental health? Explain. As students read the article, have them note details that challenge or confirm their ideas.

QUESTIONS FOR CLOSE READING AND DISCUSSION

- Researcher Andrea Mechelli says spending time in nature decreases mental fatigue. Has this been your experience? Explain. Why do you think nature has this effect? How might we reproduce this experience in cities?
- Ornithologist Tina Phillips calls birds the "perfect group of animals that people can really relate to." What does she mean? What do you think makes birds so appealing to people?
- The article offers tips on becoming a birdwatcher. How might the *technique* of birdwatching benefit mental health?

WRITING

Challenge students to write an essay about an activity they do to relax, refresh, and feel happier. It can be an experience in nature, like birdwatching, or it could be some other activity, as long as students believe that the activity produces benefits for their mental health.

As they brainstorm ideas for their essays, students might reflect on their reading of the article. Remind them that they considered *why* birdwatching could be beneficial to mood and concentration, and *how* it affects the brain. They might bring that same analysis to their chosen activity. Tell students that the essay will require them to examine 1) the activity in detail, and 2) their experience in doing their activity.

COVER STORY QUIZ + ANSWER KEY

The cover quiz can be found on page 3 of this guide.
For the Google Forms quiz, click [here](#).

1. **A** (RI.6) 2. **B** (RI.4) 3. **C** (RI.4) 4. **C** (RI.3) 5. **A** (RI.5)
6. **A** (RI.1) 7. **Answers will vary.** (W.8)



A NEW CONGRESS

The 118th United States Congress opened on January 3.

LEXILE: 950L (770L alternate reading level)

SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS) STANDARD: Power, Authority, and Governance

COMMON CORE (CCSS) STANDARDS: RI.6-8.1, RI.6-8.3, RI.6-8.5, SL.6-8.1

BEFORE READING

Tell students that a new U.S. Congress opened on January 3. Ask: What does the U.S. Congress do? What are the chambers that make up the Congress? In what ways does lawmakers' work affect your everyday life? Then have students consider this question as they read: Why are the procedures described in the article important? What do these procedures tell us about a democracy? What challenges do Congress's procedures pose for lawmakers, and why? Students should also write down any questions of their own. They may raise these questions during the discussion.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In what ways has Congress been changing? How would you explain these changes?
- The article says that House Republicans have not agreed on a leader. Why do you think they can't agree?
- Why does the article use the phrase "at press time"? What does this tell us about the news?



I'M A BLIND SCIENTIST AND INVENTOR.

More Disabled Kids Should Have the Opportunities I Had.

SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS) STANDARD: Science, Technology, and Society

COMMON CORE (CCSS) STANDARDS: RI.6-8.1, RI.6-8.4, RI.6-8.8, W.6-8.1

BEFORE READING

Ask students: What do scientists do? What skills does a scientist need? What qualities would make someone a good scientist, and why? As they read the article, students should ask, "What qualities make the author a good scientist?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Joshua Miele says, "Blindness is a hands-on process." What does he mean? What might this tell us about Miele's inclination toward scientific study?
- According to Miele, what is "STEM inclusion," and why is it important?

CLOSING ACTIVITY

Read this line of the article to students: "STEM education of most students with disabilities is a low priority because of ableism—biases and preconceptions that assume disabled students can't succeed." Give students about 10 minutes to write their responses to these questions: Why do you think these biases exist? If you heard someone express this bias, what would you say? Start a discussion by asking students to share their responses.

Name _____ Date _____

Use this week's cover story, "Let's Go Birding," to answer the questions below. For questions 1–6, circle the letter next to the best answer. If you need more space to write your response to question 7, you may use the back of this page.

<p>1. Joan Strassmann is a suitable source for this story because</p> <p>A. she wrote a book about birdwatching.</p> <p>B. she is an ornithologist at the Cornell Lab.</p> <p>C. her study on the relationship between birds and mental health appeared in <i>Scientific Reports</i>.</p> <p>D. she's a bird expert at the National Audubon Society.</p>	<p>4. According to the article, what is a cause of the recent surge in birdwatching's popularity?</p> <p>A. a book about birdwatching</p> <p>B. a report published in a prominent scientific journal</p> <p>C. the pandemic</p> <p>D. curiosity about science</p>
<p>2. The author cites a study that "showed a link between happiness and the number of bird species around people's homes and towns." The word <i>link</i> suggests that the presence of birds</p> <p>A. <i>caused</i> people's happiness.</p> <p>B. is <i>somehow related</i> to people's happiness.</p> <p>C. is <i>likely not related</i> to people's happiness.</p> <p>D. is <i>essential</i> to people's happiness.</p>	<p>5. The section titled "Birdwatcher Basics" is mostly about</p> <p>A. how to be a birdwatcher.</p> <p>B. how to protect bird species.</p> <p>C. the work of the Audubon Society.</p> <p>D. the cost of birding.</p>
<p>3. Andrea Mechelli says spending time in nature could decrease mental fatigue. That means a walk in the park could be</p> <p>A. exhausting.</p> <p>B. exciting.</p> <p>C. soothing.</p> <p>D. anxiety-inducing.</p>	<p>6. According to the article, a place where you are most likely to see birds is</p> <p>A. near water.</p> <p>B. on rooftops.</p> <p>C. in the desert.</p> <p>D. in the city.</p>

7. If you were a magazine editor, in which section would you put "Let's Go Birding," and why?

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