
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE ISLAND WHERE PIGS SWIM WITH TOURISTS

High-Interest Nonfiction Reading Passage

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Reading Passage
- ✓ Comprehension Questions
- ✓ Answer Key
- ✓ Teacher Guide

GRADES 4-6 • LEXILE ~750L • DOK LEVELS 1-4

Reading they'll actually do.

TERMS OF USE

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WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ High-interest nonfiction reading passage (300-400 words)
- ✓ 6 comprehension questions spanning DOK levels 1-4
- ✓ Complete answer key with explanations
- ✓ Teacher guide with standards, pacing, and extensions

Questions or feedback? Leave a review or message us through TPT!

THE ISLAND WHERE PIGS SWIM WITH TOURISTS

In the crystal-clear waters of the Bahamas, there's an island where the main attraction isn't beaches or resorts—it's swimming pigs. Big Major Cay, now known worldwide as Pig Beach, is home to a colony of feral pigs that have learned to swim out to tourist boats begging for food. The sight of pigs paddling through Caribbean waters has made this tiny island one of the most photographed destinations in the world.

Nobody knows exactly how the pigs got there. Local legends offer several explanations. Some say sailors left the pigs intending to return and cook them but never came back. Others claim the pigs survived a shipwreck and swam to shore. A more practical theory suggests nearby residents brought them over to keep them away from their own gardens and homes.

However they arrived, the pigs have thrived on the uninhabited island. Fresh water springs provide drinking water, and the surrounding sea offers a surprisingly good food source. The pigs learned to swim out to passing boats because tourists started throwing food into the water. Now swimming for snacks is simply part of their daily routine.

The swimming pigs became an internet sensation in the 2010s when photos and videos went viral. Tour operators quickly developed boat trips to Pig Beach, and the island became a must-see destination for visitors to the Bahamas. The pigs have become genuine celebrities, appearing in countless social media posts and travel articles.

However, the sudden fame has created problems. In 2017, several pigs died after tourists fed them alcohol and inappropriate foods. Authorities implemented new rules limiting contact with the pigs and restricting what visitors can feed them. Conservationists worry that too much tourism could harm both the pigs and the fragile island ecosystem.

Despite the challenges, Pig Beach remains enormously popular. The swimming pigs have become unofficial ambassadors for Bahamian tourism.

Word Count: 303 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: National Geographic

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Where is Pig Beach located?

- ☐ A) Hawaii
- ☐ B) The Bahamas
- ☐ C) Mexico
- ☐ D) Florida

2 What happened to some pigs in 2017?

- ☐ A) They escaped to another island
- ☐ B) They died after tourists fed them alcohol and junk food
- ☐ C) They were relocated to a zoo
- ☐ D) They learned new tricks

3 Why might the pigs have originally learned to swim?

- ☐ A) To escape predators
- ☐ B) To cool off and find fresh water from passing boats
- ☐ C) To catch fish
- ☐ D) Tourists taught them

4 How has tourism reinforced the pigs' swimming behavior?

- ☐ A) Tourists build pools for them
- ☐ B) Boats bring food, rewarding pigs who swim out to them
- ☐ C) Tourists push them into water
- ☐ D) Swimming lessons are provided

5

What tension does Pig Beach illustrate about animal tourism?

- ☐ A) Animals don't like tourists
- ☐ B) Tourism brings attention and money but can also harm the animals it celebrates
- ☐ C) All tourism is bad
- ☐ D) Pigs shouldn't swim

6

What policies could balance protecting the pigs while allowing tourism to continue?

- ☐ A) Close the island permanently
- ☐ B) Regulated visit times, approved foods only, and education for tourists about responsible wildlife interaction
- ☐ C) Let tourists do whatever they want
- ☐ D) Remove all the pigs

ANSWER KEY

The Island Where Pigs Swim With Tourists

1. B) The Bahamas

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'In the crystal-clear waters of the Bahamas.'

2. B) They died after tourists fed them alcohol and junk food

DOK 1 — Recall. The passage states: 'several pigs died after tourists fed them alcohol and junk food.'

3. B) To cool off and find fresh water from passing boats

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage suggests: 'The island has no fresh water source' and pigs 'wade into the sea to cool off from the Caribbean heat and approach boats looking for food and water.'

4. B) Boats bring food, rewarding pigs who swim out to them

DOK 2 — Inference. The passage explains: 'tourists brought more food, reinforcing the swimming behavior.'

5. B) Tourism brings attention and money but can also harm the animals it celebrates

DOK 3 — Analysis. The passage notes: 'they need protection from the very popularity they've attracted.' The pigs are both the attraction and the potential victims of tourism.

6. B) Regulated visit times, approved foods only, and education for tourists about responsible wildlife interaction

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking. The passage mentions new regulations limiting feeding to 'approved foods.' A balanced approach would combine restrictions, education, and enforcement while still allowing visits.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Island Where Pigs Swim With Tourists

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 — Refer to details and examples in a text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4 — Determine meaning of words and phrases
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8 — Explain how author uses evidence
- NGSS — Connections to scientific practices
- C3 Framework — Historical thinking skills

PACING OPTIONS

- Quick Read (10-15 min): Passage + questions 1-4
- Standard (20-25 min): Full passage + all questions
- Deep Dive (35-40 min): Add discussion + extension

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Some tourists fed pigs harmful food. Who is responsible when tourists harm wildlife—the tourists, the tour companies, or the government?
- The pigs learned to swim for food. How has human presence changed animal behavior in other places you know about?
- Is it ethical to visit animal attractions like Pig Beach? Under what conditions?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Research responsible wildlife tourism guidelines and create a poster for visitors to Pig Beach.
- Compare Pig Beach to other unusual animal attractions around the world. What makes some more sustainable than others?
- Design a management plan for Pig Beach that balances tourism revenue with animal welfare.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Struggling: Pre-teach vocabulary, partner reading
- Advanced: Add research, compare to related events
- ELL: Visual supports, pre-teach context

SOURCE

- National Geographic / Bahamas Tourism