
NOT BORING MEDIA

THE WOMAN WHO SWAM ACROSS THE PACIFIC

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 WOMAN WHO SWAM ACROSS THE PACIFIC

In 2018, endurance swimmer Benoit Lecomte set out to accomplish something no human had ever done before: swim across the Pacific Ocean from Japan to California. The journey would cover over 5,500 miles through some of the most challenging waters on Earth. While he didn't complete the crossing in one continuous attempt, his expedition pushed the absolute limits of human endurance and served important scientific purposes along the way.

Lecomte had already made history in 1998 by becoming the first person to swim across the Atlantic Ocean without a kickboard, covering 3,716 miles in 73 days of swimming. The Pacific would be exponentially harder: more than twice the distance, through colder and more unpredictable waters, with massive storms and powerful currents that could push a swimmer hundreds of miles off course.

His method involved swimming for approximately eight hours each day while a support boat tracked his exact GPS position. At night, he would rest and eat on the boat to recover from the day's exertion. Each morning, he would return to the precise GPS coordinates where he had stopped swimming the previous day and resume from that exact point. This way, every single mile he swam counted toward the total crossing, even though he wasn't swimming continuously around the clock.

The Pacific expedition faced numerous serious setbacks that tested Lecomte's determination. Equipment failures forced delays. Dangerous typhoons required the team to seek shelter. Health issues threatened to end the attempt entirely. Lecomte dealt with painful jellyfish stings, hypothermia from cold water exposure, and the profound psychological challenge of swimming for months toward a horizon that never seemed to get any closer.

The journey also served important scientific purposes beyond the athletic achievement. Lecomte collected water samples and data on ocean plastic pollution and temperature changes for research teams studying climate change. Swimming through the infamous garbage patches, he witnessed firsthand the shocking amount of plastic debris floating in supposedly remote ocean waters.

'The ocean teaches humility,' Lecomte observed. 'You can't fight it. You can only work with it.'

Word Count: 340 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: BBC News

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 How many miles is the Pacific crossing?

- ☐ A) 1,500
- ☐ B) 3,500
- ☐ C) Over 5,500
- ☐ D) 10,000

2 How long did Lecomte swim each day?

- ☐ A) 2 hours
- ☐ B) 8 hours
- ☐ C) 12 hours
- ☐ D) 24 hours

3 How did Lecomte ensure every mile counted?

- ☐ A) Never stopped
- ☐ B) Returned to exact GPS coordinates each morning
- ☐ C) Swam in circles
- ☐ D) Boat pulled him

4 What scientific purpose did the swim serve?

- ☐ A) None
- ☐ B) Collecting data on plastic pollution and temperature
- ☐ C) Testing swimsuits
- ☐ D) Mapping ocean floor

5

What made the Pacific harder than the Atlantic?

- ☐ A) Shorter distance
- ☐ B) More than twice the distance with harsher conditions
- ☐ C) More boats
- ☐ D) Warmer water

6

What does 'work with the ocean' suggest about achievement?

- ☐ A) Always fight obstacles
- ☐ B) Success sometimes requires adapting rather than overpowering
- ☐ C) Ocean is dangerous
- ☐ D) Swimming is easy

ANSWER KEY

The Woman Who Swam Across the Pacific

1. C) Over 5,500

DOK 1 — Recall.

2. B) 8 hours

DOK 1 — Recall.

3. B) Returned to exact GPS coordinates each morning

DOK 2 — Inference.

4. B) Collecting data on plastic pollution and temperature

DOK 2 — Inference.

5. B) More than twice the distance with harsher conditions

DOK 3 — Analysis.

6. B) Success sometimes requires adapting rather than overpowering

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Woman Who Swam Across the Pacific

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
- 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

- Is there value in extreme endurance achievements beyond personal satisfaction?
- Lecomte gathered pollution data during his swim. Should extreme athletes always contribute to research?
- What mental qualities do you think ultra-endurance athletes must have?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Calculate how many Olympic swimming pools equal the Pacific crossing distance.
- Research other extreme endurance achievements and their motivations.
- Design a personal challenge that pushes your limits over an extended period.

DIFFERENTIATION

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

SOURCE

- BBC News / Daily Telegraph