



READING PASSAGE 1

The National Parks of America

America's national parks are one of the country's most remarkable and influential initiatives. The concept of the national park originated in America, though it was quickly replicated by similar parks in Canada, Finland, New Zealand, Australia and elsewhere. The first American national park was Yellowstone, created in 1872. Yellowstone comprises some 3,500 square miles of wilderness and today attracts more than four million visitors a year. Since 1872, nearly 60 additional national parks have been established in the USA, incorporating almost every type of natural environment, from mountains to deserts, lakes, rivers and coastlines. They are administered by the National Parks Service (NPS), which also manages significant monuments and historic structures such as the Statue of Liberty, the Gettysburg Museum and Ford's Theatre, where President Lincoln was assassinated.

The creation of the national parks came in response to a growing attachment to the natural world that was developing in American society. In 1832, the painter George Catlin dreamed of creating 'a nation's park' to preserve the grasslands in the state of South Dakota. Catlin failed to see such a park established in his lifetime, but his vision lived on. Four years later the writer Ralph Waldo Emerson published an important essay entitled 'Nature' in which he argued that natural landscapes should be protected rather than exploited for agriculture and commerce. The campaigner Frederick Olmsted went further, claiming that every American, not only the wealthy and powerful, had the right to access places of natural beauty. The creation of a public park in the Yosemite Valley was directly the result of his work.

The development of the national parks was a process that continued through the late 19th century and the early 20th century. The establishment of the first park at Yellowstone in 1872 was perhaps the defining moment in this process. The Yellowstone national park not only preserved the headwaters of the Mississippi, Colorado and Snake rivers, but also provided a sanctuary for countless endangered species by imposing a ban on hunting in all its forms. Today such an initiative would be commonplace but in these earliest days of the conservation movement, many Americans still regarded it as their right to shoot or trap wild animals.

Yellowstone was followed by Sequoia (1890), Mount Rainier (1899), Crater Lake (1902) and Wind Cave (1903), among many other parks. But while the creation of additional parks enjoyed wide popular support, there were frequent disagreements about their purpose. For some, the primary goal was the protection of the natural world, while for others the parks were about providing public access to nature. These two goals were at times contradictory and led to a variety of competing voices and factions. In recognition of the difficulties of running these vast wilderness areas, their management was for many years placed in the hands of the military, rather than the federal or state government.

The late 19th century was also a time when railroads were being constructed across America. Increasingly, these ran through even the most remote areas, where many parks were located, making tourism possible in these locations for the very first time. While this was welcomed by many park supporters, others were concerned that visitors should appreciate the parks in particular ways. Nathaniel Langford was instrumental in setting up Yellowstone and saw the park as an ideal opportunity for the education of ordinary citizens in all aspects of the natural world and environmental conservation, which was his number one priority.

In the early 20th century, the first really significant development was the setting up of the NPS in 1916. Now for the first time a single body was charged with administering the network and managing the numerous groups and interests that had a stake in it. Stephen Mather was appointed as the first Superintendent of Parks and under his leadership seven new parks were established, including Grand Canyon, Hawaii and Mount McKinley. However, arguably even



more important was Mather's transformation of the hitherto poorly managed finances of the parks.

The NPS generally saw the primary role of the parks as being environmental protection. For this reason, most human activities were regulated – farming and forestry were certainly not allowed. However, the controversial decision to permit the construction of dams in national parks was made on the basis that the resulting supplies of water and hydroelectric power would be in the public interest. Certainly, visitor numbers were unaffected as park admissions increased every year. Then in the 1930s the number of visitors expanded dramatically, largely because mass-produced automobiles became affordable, allowing ever more city-dwellers to reach the park network. With this, the national parks assumed a pre-eminent position in the social fabric of America, a legacy that continues to the present day.

Questions 1 – 6

Choose **TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information given in the text,

Choose **FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information, or

Choose **NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this.

- 1 America copied the idea of national parks from other countries.
- 2 Yellowstone is the most frequently visited national park in the USA.
- 3 The NPS is responsible for certain buildings as well as natural landscapes.
- 4 Catlin was criticised by some people for proposing 'a nation's park'.
- 5 Emerson believed that farms and businesses should be allowed to use land freely.
- 6 Olmsted helped establish a park in the Yosemite Valley

Questions 7 – 13

Complete the notes. Write **ONE WORD ONLY** from the text in each gap.

Development of the National Parks

Late 19th Century

- in Yellowstone Park, every type of **7** was prohibited
- Yellowstone and other parks were administered by the **8**
- the development of a railroad system encouraged new kinds of **9**
- Langford believed that public **10** was the most important role of the parks

Early 20th Century

- Mather greatly improved the **11** of the parks
- the NPS allowed some **12** to be built in national parks
- in the 1930s, the popularity of the parks increased with the availability of **13**