Thinking Guide Activities – Expository

Title of the Selection: Slithery Serpents of the Lone Star State
Teaching Band Grades 3 - 5
Genre: Nonfiction – Informational, Magazine Article

The selection and Expository Thinking Guide are provided. The Expository Thinking Guide identifies the topic, central idea of the selection, and the main idea of each paragraph. In addition, the main ideas are clustered by color code to develop a meaningful summary.

- Slithery Serpents of the Lone Star State Selection
- Slithery Serpents of the Lone Star State Expository Thinking Guide
- Color-Coded Expository Thinking Guide and Summary

The Expository Thinking Guide is used to develop other fun and interactive activities. Fisher Reyna Education offers the following activities and test items:

- Matching Pre-Reading Activity
- Matching Activity Part 1
- Matching Activity Part 2
- Outline Scramble Activity
- Thinking Guide Cloze 1st Letter Activity
- Thinking Guide Cloze Blank Activity
- Thinking Guide Write Main Ideas Activity
- Vocabulary Activity
- Marked Selection Activity
- Test Questions and Answer Keys
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**Non-Venomous**

6. Checkered Garter Snake -- most common species in the southern part of the state
7. Bullsnake -- eats lots of rodents
8. Rough Earthsnake -- eats earthworms and is smaller than a pencil
9. Rat Snake -- most aggressive non-venomous snake
10. Kingsnake -- will eat other snakes

**Venomous**

11. Western Diamondback Rattlesnake -- largest, most widespread, and dangerous serpent in Texas
12. Western Cottonmouth -- prefers habitats close to the water
13. Texas Coral Snake -- pattern of red and yellow bands touch
14. Copperhead -- adapted well to urbanization
# Slithery Serpents of the Lone Star State

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The main ideas are clustered by color code to develop a meaningful summary. The statements provided in the Thinking Guide and summary paragraph serve as only ONE way to paraphrase the expository elements for this selection.

Understanding the role of Texas snakes in our world is interesting and helpful. Snakes are reptile predators, and their diet naturally controls animal populations. Their features tell who they are and where they live. To get to know them better, think about the snake populations as non-venomous and venomous. Non-venomous Texas snakes are snakes like the Checkered Garter Snake and Rat Snake. Some Venomous Texas snakes are the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake and Texas Coral Snake.
Matching Pre-Reading Activity

Directions and Activity Variations
Students may work individually or with a partner. Teacher shows the titles, subtitles and photos with captions as a pre-reading activity to the Matching Activity.

Subtitles and Headings in Bold Print

Actual photo with photo courtesy

Non-Venomous
Checkered Garter Snake
Bullsnake
Rough Earthsnake
Rat Snake Texas and Great Plains
Kingsnakes (Speckled and Desert)

Venomous
Western Diamondback Rattlesnake
Western Cottonmouth
Texas Coral Snake
Copperhead (Southern and Broad-banded)
Matching Activity Part 1

Directions and Activity Variations
Students may work individually or with a partner.

1. Cut apart the main ideas and give one main idea to individual student or partners. Teacher reads the selection one paragraph at a time. Students identify when they have the matching main idea.
2. Provide the selection and cut-apart main ideas. Students read the selection and match cut-apart main ideas to paragraphs in the selection.
3. Provide cut-apart selection and cut-apart main ideas. Students match cut-apart paragraphs to the cut-apart main ideas.

---

| ---most aggressive non-venomous snake |
| --- adapted well to urbanization |
| ---largest, most widespread, and dangerous serpent in Texas |
| --- prefers habitats close to the water |
| ---eats lots of rodents |
| ---most common species in the southern part of the state |

Snakes are reptile predators.

---eats earthworms and is smaller than a pencil

Snake populations

---will eat other snakes

The snake’s diet naturally controls animal populations.

Their features tell who they are and where they live.

--- pattern of red and yellow bands touch

Introduction to Texas snakes
Matching Activity Part 2

Whether you are hiking on a trail, helping in a garden, or catching a fly ball in a baseball field, you may very well stumble across a native Texas snake. By understanding the differences between them, as well as their role in our world, you can make your experiences with snakes safe, interesting, and fun. There are at least 76 known species of snakes in our diverse state of Texas, of which 11 are venomous. Since Texas covers such a big area containing many habitats, there are many commonly found species, each with their own unique traits.

All snakes are reptiles and though they are highly-evolved predators, they have no limbs, no external ears, and no eyelids. They have scaly skin (which they shed in one piece 3-6 times a year), most lay eggs, and are cold-blooded, which means they control their body temperature by basking in the warm sun or burrowing in holes or under rocks. Some snakes kill their prey by constriction (wrapping around them and squeezing tightly) or by swallowing them whole. Venomous snakes have a special adaptation of using their fangs to inject a toxin into their prey to make them unable to move so that they can be swallowed.

A snake’s diet would mainly include animals that reproduce frequently, like invertebrates, fish, frogs, rodents, birds, and other small mammals. In other words, they eat the animals that there are a lot of! Therefore, they contribute to the natural balance and control of populations, especially of mice and rats. Snakes’ predators usually include birds of prey and carnivorous (meat-eating) mammals.

Like other animals, snakes possess unique colors, scale patterns, behaviors, and body parts that tell us who they are and where they live. Some have brightly-colored bands, like the Texas coral snake, or noise-making rattles that tell us “Watch out, I’m dangerous!” Others, like the Copperhead, are covered with “leafy patterns” for camouflage to blend in with the environment. Some snakes will “puff up” to look bigger to scare a predator. Head shape is often an indicator of whether or not a snake is venomous, as many of the vipers have a triangular-shaped head (whereas most non-venomous snakes’ heads are oval). In addition, the “pit vipers” such as the rattlesnakes and Cottonmouth have a pair of heat-sensitive pits between their eyes or nostrils to detect warm-blooded animals. These are just a few of the many spectacular features of such a diverse reptile.

Like many animals, snake populations are affected by loss of habitat and food supply. Many are hunted for their skins and size, and some are killed out of fear. We do, however, need to be particularly cautious of venomous snakes, since some bites can be fatal. To help us get to know them better and how they fit into our world, here are a few brief descriptions of some of our coiling cohabitants.
Matching Activity Part 2

Non-Venomous

**Checkered Garter Snake**  This is by far the most common terrestrial and garter species in the southern part of the state. Some have a striped pattern and some look like a checker-board. These are usually seen in back yards, gardens, and grassy areas near water and eat worms, tadpoles, and frogs.

**Bullsnake**  Bullsnakes are khaki-colored with brown spots and have a dark ridge between the eyes that looks like the middle part of bulls’ horns. They are economically beneficial and reduce the need for local rodent poisoning because when it comes to mice, rats, and gophers, they can eat a lot!

**Rough Earthsnake**  This little brown burrower is usually found under boards and damp soil. It eats earthworms and, being thinner than a pencil, is not big enough to bite humans.

**Rat Snake (Texas and Great Plains)**  Among the most aggressive non-venomous snakes in the state, most will bite if threatened, but the pressure of their jaws is light and will only leave shallow scratches. These are the most common long, brown-mottled snakes (with completely flat undersides) which like to hide in barn rafters, attics, and high in trees and mainly feed on birds and rodents. They are also called “chicken snakes.”

**Kingsnakes (Speckled and Desert)**  The title “King” seems to describe snakes that eat other snakes, making this a favorite among ranchers. Kingsnakes will eat rattlesnakes and coral snakes, along with lizards, mice, and birds. Texan species appear glossy and dark with small, pale speckles and yellow belly.
### Western Diamondback Rattlesnake
The largest, most widespread and dangerous serpent in Texas, its Latin name *atrox* means “grim” or “frightful.” Though few people actually die from this snakebite, it does account for nearly all of the serious bites treated in Texas hospitals. It is likely to be noticed around farm buildings with rats and mice, and will even target rabbits for dinner. The diamond-shaped blotches along the spine and black-and-white banded tail make it easy to identify. Also, the built-in rattle at the end of the tail to alert threat is made of loose, bony rings that are placed every time the skin is shed. The number of rattles is not a good indicator of age, however, since the segments can break off.

### Western Cottonmouth
Also known as a Water Moccasin, this snake prefers habitat close to water due to more variation in prey. This dark, heavy-bodied snake will eat fish, mammals, and even other smaller cottonmouths and copperheads. It will display threat by opening its jaws and showing the milky interior of its mouth, hence the name.

### Texas Coral Snake
This is one of several black-, red-, and yellow-banded serpents in Texas, but is the only whose red and yellow bands touch. The venom from the coral is several times more powerful than that of the western diamondback rattler and almost equals that of a cobra! Still, few people are harmed by coral snakes. This snake likes dry, woody areas and eats small snakes, skinks, and lizards.

### Copperhead (Southern and Broad-banded)
With its boldly-marked bands of chestnut-brown or rust against a gray or pinkish background and copper-colored head, this reptile lays hidden among piles of dead leaves and rocks waiting to ambush frogs, lizards, rodents, and invertebrates. Copperheads have adapted well to urbanization and may not always leave when their habitat is changed!
# Expository Thinking Guide

**Cloze – 1st Letter Activity**

**Title of the Selection**  
Slithery Serpents of the Lone Star State

**Genre:** Nonfiction – Informational, Magazine Article

## Directions

As selection is read, complete the words in the blanks with the first letter given.

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Expository Thinking Guide
Cloze – Blank Activity

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Directions
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Write Main Ideas Activity

**Title of the Selection**  Slithery Serpents of the Lone Star State

**Genre:** Nonfiction – Informational, Magazine Article

**Directions**
Students take notes that include topic, central idea of the selection, and main idea of each paragraph. Paragraphs with implied main ideas increase the level of difficulty with this activity.

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Slithery Serpents of the Lone Star State
Vocabulary – Using Context Clues

Directions: Display the following vocabulary list. Ask the students to define the words they recognize. Then read *Slithery Serpents of the Lone Star State* as the students listen for these words. After hearing one of the listed words in context, ask students to give its definition. The words are listed in the order in which they appear in the article.

Note: This vocabulary activity should be used after students have read the article.

1. fly
2. stumble
3. shed
4. basking
5. constriction
6. carnivorous
7. posses
8. indicator
9. pits
10. fatal
Marked Selection Activity

Title of the Selection: Slithery Serpents of the Lone Star State
Genre: Nonfiction – Informational, Magazine Article

Directions

Students use marking strategies and complete the thinking guide as they read the selection. A marked selection is provided.

Marking codes are used to demonstrate comprehension strategies. Marking codes are necessary for the students to have a system for analyzing or processing what they read. This system of showing your work while working independently on a reading comprehension selection allows teachers to make effective instructional decisions. When the staff works as a team to provide instruction and monitor progress, it is important for everyone to require the same set of marking codes.

Students who consistently score 95% or better may not be required to show their work.

For more information on marking codes and comprehension strategies see our book titled, *Solution For Success: Reading*

*Lois Fisher & Rachel Reyna*
Understanding the role of Texas snakes in our world is interesting and helpful. Snakes are reptile predators, and their diet naturally controls animal populations. Their features tell who they are and where they live. To get to know them better, think about the snake populations as non-venomous and venomous. Non-venomous Texas snakes are snakes like the Checkered Garter Snake and Rat Snake. Some Venomous Texas snakes are the Western Diamondback Rattlesnake and Texas Coral Snake.
1. Paragraph 4 is mainly about –

   A. growing snake populations  
   B. Texas snakes  
   C. the unique colors found in snake patterns  
   D. the many diverse features of snakes

2. The reader can tell that some non-venomous snakes are –

   A. aggressive and may bite humans  
   B. hunt when they burrow near water  
   C. are found only in Texas  
   D. are slithery and hard to catch

3. Which sentence shows that snakes in Texas are widespread?

   A. A snake’s diet would mainly include animals that reproduce frequently.  
   B. Since Texas covers such a big area containing many habitats, there are many commonly found species, each with their own unique traits.  
   C. Snakes’ predators usually include birds of prey and carnivorous (meat-eating) mammals.  
   D. Like many animals, snake populations are affected by loss of habitat and food supply.
4 Which of the following is the best summary of the story?

A Slithery Serpents are widespread throughout the Lone Star State. They may be seen while hiking, gardening, or playing outdoors. Snakes are interesting and fun to learn about.

B Texas is home to many snake species. They can be both helpful and harmful. Learning about snakes is interesting, fun, and useful. Snake populations can be grouped into two categories: Non-Venomous and Venomous. Understanding their role in our world is important if you live in the Lone Star State.

C Snake populations in Texas may be venomous. Snake populations have been affected by loss of habitat. In order to be safe around snakes, it is important to learn about their features and different traits. Snakes are both interesting and useful to learn about.

D The Lone Star State is home to many snakes. Many are hunted or killed out of fear. Even though snake populations have been affected by loss of habitat, it is helpful to learn about them. Snakes are interesting to learn about. There are many commonly found species in the Lone Star State.

5 Which words in paragraph 2 help the reader understand the meaning of burrowing?

A highly-evolved predators
B basking in the sun
C in holes or under rocks
D squeezing tightly

Answer Key: 1-D, 2-A, 3-B, 4-B, 5-C
3.13 Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

(A) identify the details or facts that support the main idea;
(B) draw conclusions from the facts presented in text and support those assertions with textual evidence;
(C) identify explicit cause and effect relationships among ideas in texts; and
(D) use text features (e.g., bold print, captions, key words, italics) to locate information and make and verify predictions about contents of text.

4.13 Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

a. identify the details or facts that support main idea
b. draw conclusions from the facts presented in text and support those assertions with textual evidence;
c. identify cause and effect relationships among ideas in texts; and
d. use text features to locate information and make and verify predictions about contents of text

5.11 Students analyze, make inferences and draw conclusions about expository text and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:

(A) summarize the main ideas and supporting details in a text in ways that maintain meaning and logical order;
(B) determine the facts in text and verify them through established methods;
(C) analyze how the organizational pattern of a text (e.g., cause-and-effect, compare-and-contrast, sequential order, logical order, classification schemes) influences the relationships among the ideas;
(D) use multiple text features and graphics to gain an overview of the contents of text and to locate information; and
(E) synthesize and make logical connections between ideas within a text and across two or three texts representing similar or different genres.