

Lesson: Ghost Hunters: Rumpled Sheets

Lesson Topic: Can Raccoons be Friendly Neighbors?

Can Raccoons Be Friendly Neighbors?

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Raccoons have been a bother to humans for hundreds of years. In the Mayan civilization, these bold creatures were known to steal corn. Other early settlers battled with raccoons before trapping them for meat and fur. Today, these mammals live in urban and rural areas across the United States. An average-sized raccoon weighs 15 to 40 pounds. Most grow to be three feet long.



□ Raccoons are approximately the same size as a small dog.



□ This raccoon peers out of a dumpster, probably after feasting on some garbage.

Even though raccoons are unwelcome creatures, they thrive in cities and towns. Most raccoons are nocturnal and search for food during the night. They will eat almost any plant or animal they can find. In populated areas, they don't have to look very far. Raccoons will eat plants and vegetables from gardens. They will also feast on garbage or pet food.

In the wild, raccoons live near water sources in wooded areas. They capture and eat small animals from the water. They are also quick enough to catch small mammals, like squirrels and mice. Raccoons also love to eat eggs. If they see a bird nest, they will steal any eggs that they can find.

Because they have to work harder to find food, rural raccoons usually weigh less than city raccoons. In colder climates, these raccoons try to store fat in the fall. They become inactive during the winter months and may lose up to half of their body weight by spring.



□ A wild raccoon hides in a maple tree. Raccoons are great at both climbing and swimming.



- Even urban raccoons might sometimes have to share their food with other wild animals, such as skunks. These two are eating cat food.

Both urban and rural raccoons handle their food in a unique way. Raccoons' front feet have five long toes, and they put those toes to good use. Before they eat, they will play with their food. If they're around water, they even act like they are washing it.

Just like any other animal, raccoons can become aggressive and dangerous. Urban residents should take several precautions in order to protect their family members, pets, and property. Experts recommend keeping garbage containers locked tight. If a raccoon starts finding food in one place, it is likely to come back repeatedly. It's also smart to feed pets inside and keep them indoors during the night. Also, while they are beautiful creatures, it's best to appreciate raccoons from afar!



- Raccoons can carry dangerous diseases such as rabies, which make them aggressive. However, this raccoon is just yawning!

Question 1:

What answer does the author seem to give to the question, "can raccoons be friendly neighbors"?

- ☐ She thinks they are good neighbors because they are cute and intelligent.
- ☐ She definitely thinks they are unfriendly, since they are diseased and have attacked children.
- ☐ She thinks they are excellent neighbors since they catch rodents and stay away from places where humans dwell.
- ☐ She thinks they are not very good neighbors since they eat out of the trash and can be aggressive.

Question 2:

What sentence from the article best describes the main idea?

- ☐ While they are beautiful creatures, it is best to appreciate raccoons from afar!
- ☐ Both urban and rural raccoons handle their food in a unique way.
- ☐ Today, raccoons live in urban and rural areas across the United States.
- ☐ Even though raccoons are unwelcome creatures, they thrive in cities and towns.

Question 3:

Based on the article, what is the most likely reason rural raccoons hibernate in the winter while urban raccoons do not?

- ☐ Rural raccoons are lazier than urban raccoons and would prefer to sleep when it is cold.
- ☐ Rural raccoons are not bred to withstand winter months while urban raccoons have been made for cooler weather.
- ☐ Rural raccoons are skinnier than urban raccoons and have less fat to protect them against winter weather.
- ☐ Less food is available in the winter to rural raccoons, while urban raccoons have a more constant food supply.

Question 4:

Read the passage below.

*Most raccoons are **nocturnal** and search for food during the night.*

What word most helps you determine the meaning of the word **nocturnal**?

- ☐ food
- ☐ raccoons
- ☐ search
- ☐ night

Question 5:

Read the passages below.

Passage 1

Even though raccoons are unwelcome creatures, they thrive in cities and towns. They will eat almost any plant or animal they can find. In populated areas, they don't have to look very far. Raccoons will eat plants and vegetables from gardens. They will also feast on garbage or pet food.

Passage 2

Raccoons have been a bother to humans for hundreds of years. In the Mayan civilization, these bold creatures were known to steal corn. Other early settlers battled with raccoons before trapping them for meat and fur. Today, these mammals live in urban and rural areas across the United States.

How are these passages organized?

- ☐ They both present a problem and then describe a solution. Also, passage 1 makes a statement and then gives supporting details.
- ☐ They are both arranged in chronological order. Also, passage 1 makes a statement and then gives supporting details.
- ☐ They both make a statement and then give supporting details. Also, passage 2 presents the details in chronological order.

Question 6:

Read the blog entry below from a woman with a pet raccoon.

Sandy, my raccoon, is hilarious. He gets into just about everything and loves to eat anything. He occasionally hisses or bites, but this is just part of being an animal. He is also extremely loving, and very smart. I would encourage anyone to get a pet raccoon.

How is the blogger's view of raccoons different from the author of the article?

- ☐ The blogger thinks that raccoons will eat a wide variety of foods.
- ☐ The blogger thinks that having a raccoon around is safe.
- ☐ The blogger thinks that raccoons are wild animals.
- ☐ The blogger thinks that raccoons are very smart.

Question 7:

What source could you consult for more information on raccoons?

- ☐ a guidebook about domestic animals
- ☐ a website dedicated to aquatic animals
- ☐ a book about vegetarian mammals
- ☐ a website about animal pests

Question 8:

What information from the article is demonstrated in the story "Ghost Hunters: Rumpled Sheets"?

Check all that are true.

- ☐ Rural raccoons usually weigh less than city raccoons.
- ☐ Raccoons can become aggressive and dangerous.
- ☐ If a raccoon starts finding food in one place, it is likely to come back repeatedly.
- ☐ Before they eat, raccoons will play with their food.
- ☐ Raccoons are nocturnal.

Question 9:

Which is the *best* reason a person should stay away from raccoons?

- ☐ They can become aggressive and dangerous.
- ☐ If they start finding food in one place, they are likely to come back repeatedly.
- ☐ They will feast on garbage or pet food.
- ☐ They are quick enough to catch small mammals like squirrels and mice.