

Reading Performance Assessment Practice Task F5
High School – 2009 – *Are Americans Destined for a Diet of Bread and Water?*

Read the following article carefully and **make notes in the margin** as you read. Your notes should include:

- Comments that show that you **understand** the article. (A summary or statement of the main idea of important sections may serve this purpose.)
- Questions you have that show what you are **wondering** about as you read.
- Notes that differentiate between **fact** and **opinion**.
- Observations about how the **author’s craft** (organization, word choice, perspective, support) and **choices** affect the article.

Your **margin notes** are part of your score for this assessment.

Student _____
Teacher _____ **Class Period** _____
School _____ **School District** _____

NOTE: This Associated Press article appeared in the GRANTS PASS DAILY COURIER on Saturday, May 5, 2007. Almost two years after the article’s publication, the mystery of the honeybee die-off continues today.

ARE AMERICANS DESTINED FOR A DIET OF BREAD AND WATER?

Some experts fear that may be the case, if the mysterious honeybee die-off isn’t brought to a halt.

BELTSVILLE, Md.

Unless someone or something stops it soon, the mysterious killer that is wiping out many of the nation’s honeybees could have a devastating effect on America’s dinner plate, perhaps even reducing us to a glorified bread-and-water diet.

Honeybees don’t just make honey – they pollinate more than 90 of the tastiest flowering crops we have.

Among them: apples, nuts, avocados, soybeans, asparagus, broccoli, celery, squash and cucumbers. And lots of the really sweet and tart stuff, too, including citrus fruit, peaches, kiwi, cherries, blueberries, cranberries, strawberries, cantaloupe and other melons.

In fact, about one-third of the human diet comes from insect-pollinating plants, and the honeybee is responsible for 80 percent of that pollination, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Even cattle, which feed on alfalfa, depend on bees. So if the collapse worsens, we could end up being “stuck with grains and water,” said Kevin Hackett, the national program leader for USDA’s bee and pollination program. “This is the biggest general threat to our food supply,” Hackett said.

While not all scientists foresee a food crisis, noting that large-scale bee die-offs have happened before, this one seems particularly baffling and alarming.

Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read:

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U.S. beekeepers in the past few months have lost one-quarter of their colonies – or about five times the normal winter losses – because of what scientists have dubbed Colony Collapse Disorder. The problem started in November and seemed to have spread to 27 states, with similar collapses reported in Brazil, Canada and parts of Europe.



Scientists are struggling to figure out what is killing the honeybees, and early results of a key study point to some kind of disease or parasite.

Even before this disorder struck, America’s honeybees were in trouble. Their numbers were steadily shrinking, because their genes do not equip them to fight poisons and disease very well, and because their gregarious nature exposes them to ailments that afflict thousands of their close cousins.

“Quite frankly, the question is whether the bees can weather this perfect storm,” Hackett said. “Do they have the resilience to bounce back? We’ll know probably by the end of the summer.”

Experts from Brazil and Europe have joined in the detective work at USDA’s bee lab in suburban Washington. In recent weeks, Hackett briefed Vice President Cheney’s office on the problem.

Congress has held hearings on the matter.

“This crisis threatens to wipe out production of crops dependent on bees for pollination,” Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said in a statement.

A congressional study said honeybees add about \$15 billion a year in value to our food supply.

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*Notes on my thoughts,
reactions and questions as I
read:*

1. What was the general health of the honeybee population **before** the mystery die-off began? **Give an example** from the text.

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2. Find at least **one fact** and **one opinion** in the article and **explain** why you think it is a fact or opinion.

Fact:	Explain:
Opinion:	Explain:

3. What is the relationship between the honeybee and the human food supply as explained in this article? Draw or describe this **relationship** in the box below.

Title: _____

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4. Why is the article titled, “Are Americans destined for a diet of bread and water?” Use content and examples from the text to **explain** why the author chose this title.

5. What does Kevin Hackett, of the US Department of Agriculture, mean when he states, “Quite frankly, the question is whether the bees can weather this perfect storm”? Use information from the article to **support your answer**.

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6. What is the **author's purpose** in writing this article? **Support your answer** with language from the text.

7. Use this T-Chart to identify **three things** that the **author does** or **uses** in the article to convince the reader that the information in the article is **accurate** and **believable**.

What the author does to convince the reader:	What effect does this have on the reader?	Why does the author use this technique?