

STUDY QUESTIONS

TO “LOST THUNDER”

Study and learn facts and ideas based on this Young Naturalists nonfiction story in *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer*, March-April 2026, www.mndnr.gov/mcvmagazine.

Minnesota Conservation Volunteer magazine is your guide to wild things. Every other month, six times a year, the magazine arrives in your school library. Each one has a story for Young Naturalists like you. **Are you curious about wild things?** Young Naturalists tells true stories that can answer all kinds of questions such as these—

Have you ever heard of a purple wartyback? How about a pink heelsplitter, pimple-back, or monkeyface? All are Minnesota freshwater mussels. Read Young Naturalists stories to learn which species (kinds) of critters live in Minnesota—frogs, salamanders, snakes, wild cats, wild dogs, weasels, mice, and rabbits.

Want to **peek inside the den of a red fox** and see how the kits grow up? Are you a rock hound searching for agates? Have you ever wondered what’s alive under snow? How animals see? Why is a bluebird blue? How birds fly?

Would you like to hear the true story of **giants of the ice age**? Young Naturalists also tells you about the underground universe. You can read the story of a tiny owl that went to a hospital with an injured wing. Find out about a boy who worked in a logging camp. Read the story of Ojibwe children today hunting and gathering like their ancestors did.

Learn how to get started **camping, snowshoeing, ice fishing, or canoeing**.

Find these stories and more online at www.mndnr.gov/young_naturalists.

Your knowledge of wild things helps you explore and enjoy the outdoors. Have fun!

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1. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS NOT TRUE ABOUT THE PASSENGER PIGEON?

- a. They are a domestic bird.
- b. They are completely gone
- c. They used to be plentiful
- d. They are a keystone species

2. THE PASSENGER PIGEON'S NAME COMES FROM WHAT CHARACTERISTIC."

- a. Its long tail and wings
- b. Its French ancestry
- c. Its migration patterns
- d. Its ability to swerve and dive as it flies

3. TRUE OR FALSE: WHILE THERE ARE NO MORE PASSENGER PIGEONS IN THE WILD, PEOPLE CAN STILL SEE PASSENGER PIGEONS IN ZOOS.

4. BESIDES THE PASSENGER PIGEON, WHAT IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF A KEYSTONE SPECIES THAT IS MENTIONED IN THE STORY?

- a. Woolly mammoth
- b. Bison
- c. Domestic pigeon
- d. Trumpeter swan

5. IN THE STORY, FOOD FROM THE FOREST, WHAT ALERTED THE SISTERS TO THE PASSENGER PIGEONS' ARRIVAL?

- a. Smoke and sparks popping from the fire

- b. The sound of loud wind
- c. The sight of pigeons racing across the sky under the tree canopy
- d. Several pigeons dropping down from the sky

6. WHAT IS ONE DETAIL FROM THE STORY THAT SUPPORTS THE INFERENCE THAT CHASKE AND MAZOKIYEWIN'S FAMILY MAY HAVE HAD SOME CONTACT WITH EUROPEAN SETTLERS?

7. BASED ON STORY DETAILS, TWO OF THE STORIES TAKE PLACE DURING SPRING. WHICH STORY IS SET DURING AUTUMN?

- a. A Sister's Gift
- b. Barrels Full of Birds
- c. Food from the Forest
- d. None (all three take place in the Spring)

8. IN BARRELS FULL OF BIRDS, THE FARMERS' REACTIONS TO THE FLOCKS OF PASSENGER PIGEONS (WHETHER THEY WOULD BE HAPPY OR NOT HAPPY TO SEE THEM) ARE BASED ON WHAT?

9. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF AN ANIMAL SPECIES WHOSE POPULATION WAS THREATENED BY HUMAN ACTIVITIES, BUT RECOVERED?

- a. Bison
- b. Trumpeter swans
- c. Canada geese
- d. All of the above

10. WHAT IS THE AUTHOR REFERENCING BY USING THE WORD "THUNDER" IN THE STORY TITLE AND AGAIN AT THE END OF THE STORY?

- a. Their epic migration and their ability to swerve and dive as they fly
- b. The loud sounds and darkening of the sky as passenger pigeons passed overhead, as well as the impact they had on the landscape as a keystone species
- c. Their exploitation by market hunters and eventual extinction
- d. The guano that fertilized new plant growth within the deciduous forests of eastern North America

CHALLENGE QUESTION:

THE THREE STORIES WITHIN LOST THUNDER BRING TO LIFE THE DECLINING NUMBERS OF PASSENGER PIGEONS – FROM CLOUDS THAT DARKENED THE SKY TO FEWER AND FEWER FLOCKS AND EVENTUALLY EXTINCTION. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE AUTHOR IS TRYING TO TEACH US THROUGH THE THREE STORIES WITHIN LOST THUNDER?

MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS PRACTICE ITEMS

1. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STORY DETAILS IS EVIDENCE OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON'S ROLE AS A KEYSTONE SPECIES OF THE DECIDUOUS FOREST?"

- a. Early settlers from Europe saw how numerous they were
- b. Fossilized remains suggest they lived at the same time as the woolly mammoths
- c. They ate massive amounts of acorns, chestnuts, and beech nuts
- d. Their long tail and wings give them the strength they need for migration.

2. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD BE CONSIDERED A MAIN IDEA FROM THE STORY?

- a. We don't know a lot about the passenger pigeon because the last one died over a 100 years ago.
- b. While humans are to blame for the extinction of the passenger pigeon, we can learn from what happened and take steps today to help protect other species from going extinct.
- c. Passenger pigeons were a very important food source for Indigenous peoples many years ago, and also for the early settlers from Europe.
- d. Because the passenger pigeon is extinct, we can't learn too much about them, but we can use our imaginations to remember them.

3. ON THE SECOND PAGE OF THE STORY, IN THE SECTION "A DRAMATIC LOSS," THE AUTHOR'S WORD CHOICES GIVE US CLUES AS TO HOW HE FEELS ABOUT THE EXTINCTION OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CAN WE INFER FROM THESE WORD CHOICES?

- a. The author feels that the extinction of the passenger pigeon is really unfortunate, since its loss has had such an impact on Minnesota and could have been prevented.
- b. The author isn't upset that the passenger pigeon is gone because we can still picture them in our imaginations
- c. The author is very angry about their extinction.
- d. The author feels really sorry for the passenger pigeon because they were sold for food.