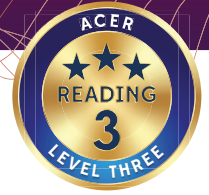


ACER Certificate in Reading

Sample Question



Reading level 3

Finding Information

Wild Food Guide: Dandelions



Many people today are interested in learning more about the wild foods their forebears used to gather when times were hard. One plant that Europeans and early settlers in America knew how to get full value from was the dandelion. The flowers, leaves and roots are all edible and can be used in a variety of ways. The blossom can be fried like a fritter and the petals and leaves can be added to salads. The leaves can also be boiled and served hot or added to soups and stews. The root can be dried, roasted, ground and used as a substitute for instant coffee. Dandelions are a good source of vitamin C and potassium.

Why, you might ask, did such a nutritious and versatile plant fall out of favour? One theory is that people associated foraging for wild food with being poor, but the answer is more likely to be that dandelions have a very bitter taste. The bitterness is contained in the milky white juice found in all the green parts of the plant. You can leach this out by boiling the leaves in water for several minutes and then draining the water away. Picking new leaves also helps because these contain less bitter juice than the older leaves. Plants that grow in damp, shady conditions are often less bitter than plants growing in full sun.

Some people used to disguise the bitter flavour by rolling the leaves in fatty pieces of bacon or by cooking them in olive oil. (Fat tends to coat the tongue and helps to stop the bitter flavour getting to the taste buds.) People also vary greatly in their sensitivity

to bitterness. It all depends on the number of bitter taste buds they have on their tongue. For some people, the taste of dandelion leaves is so bitter nothing can ever hide it, but for others, bitterness is a taste they barely notice. If you are interested in eating dandelions, there are many recipes and helpful hints available from modern dandelion foragers on the Internet.

FRITTERED FLOWERS

Ingredients:

- 24 dandelion blossoms – remove all the green parts
- 1 cup plain flour
- ½ teaspoon each of thyme, marjoram, sage and paprika

1. Mix flour and seasonings in a bowl.
2. Rinse the dandelion flowers in water and cover them in the flour mixture.
3. Coat the bottom of a frying pan in oil and set over medium heat. Fry the flowers in the oil. Turn them until they are golden brown on all sides.

The fritters taste best served fresh and hot.

Note:

Be careful where you pick dandelions to eat. Do not pick dandelions that have been sprayed with weed killer or that are growing on roadsides or in polluted areas.

According to the text, how is the dandelion root used?

- A It is grated to make a salad.
- B It is powdered to make a drink.
- C It is boiled to make a soup.
- D It is fried to make fritters.

Answer: B. It is powdered to make a drink.

Explanation

This question requires students to locate and recognise a reworded version of information in the text, while dealing with ambiguity. The relevant part of the text is located in the first paragraph: 'The root can be dried, roasted, ground and used as a substitute for instant coffee.' The sentence can potentially be misinterpreted as four different ways of using the root, instead of a sequence of processes. The key for the student is to recognise that the writer's choice to use the conjunctive 'and' instead of the disjunctive 'or', helps to resolve the ambiguity.

Once the any ambiguity is resolved, the student has to equate 'dried, roasted, [and] ground' with 'powdered'. This relies on the student's familiarity with 'powder' as a verb, but this level of vocabulary knowledge is expected for students performing at this level.

In addition, there is low-level competing information from the uses of the other parts of the plant in the same paragraph. However, at Band 12, this type of competing information is unlikely to significantly contribute to the question's difficulty.

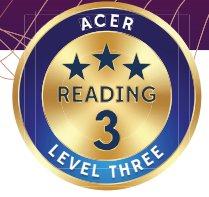
Text complexity

There are familiar aspects to this text along with substantial complexities. There are two sections with familiar structures: a prose information section, and a recipe. However, there is no transition between the sections, and understanding the link between them requires linking explicit information between the two texts that is not in a prominent position.

Dandelions may not be a familiar plant, or a student may know the plant by a different name. Even if the student knows the plant, eating it may be new, unfamiliar information. There is also some vocabulary that may be unfamiliar, for example: 'foraging' and 'foragers', 'forebears', 'taste buds', 'fritter', or 'leach'. Unfamiliar content and vocabulary add to the complexity of texts at this level.

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Sample Question



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Note:

Be careful where you pick dandelions to eat. Do not pick dandelions that have been sprayed with weed killer or that are growing on roadsides or in polluted areas.

According to the text, what is one problem with eating dandelions today?

- A Too much potassium is not good for you.
- B Too many people are allergic to dandelions.
- C Some dandelions are exposed to chemicals.
- D Some types of dandelions are poisonous.

Answer: C. Some dandelions are exposed to chemicals.

Explanation

The key information to answer this question appears in a note below the information section of the text:

Note: Be careful where you pick dandelions to eat. Do not pick dandelions that have been sprayed with weed killer or that are growing on roadsides or in polluted areas.

The complexity comes from the student having to deal with extensive competing information because the relevant information is not in a prominent location. Notes might be overlooked when scanning a text because their function is often to provide extra information or clarification rather than main ideas. Students may focus on scanning the main text for the information. Not only will they be unsuccessful in locating the answer there, they will also find only competing information.

Depending on the student, the vocabulary may also add some complexity, however, matching 'weed killer' and 'pollution' to 'chemicals' is a level of complexity consistent with this Band.

Text complexity

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