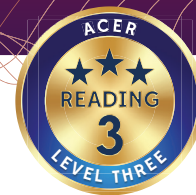


ACER Certificate in Reading

Sample Question



Reading level 3

Interpret Meaning

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.

Anya ate some dandelion leaves that were covered in olive oil. They still tasted very bitter. The most likely explanation for this is that Anya

- A did not wrap the leaves in fatty bacon pieces.
- B should have covered the leaves in flour as well.
- C did not coat her tongue with oil first.
- D has many bitter taste buds on her tongue.

Answer: D. has many bitter taste buds on her tongue.

Explanation

This question requires students to identify where one idea is a generalised version of another. The relevant information in the text spans three sentences in the second paragraph:

‘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.’

To arrive at the correct answer, the student must make the connection between the main idea of these sentences, which is the general form, and an altered form of the same idea: the specific case of Anya. The main idea of the three sentences above is that people sensitive to bitterness will always taste bitterness because they have many bitter taste buds. Anya tastes the bitterness despite trying to mask it with oil, so she must be sensitive to bitterness and so have many bitter taste buds. It is the same idea, but presented differently.

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.