

Directions

This passage is about the Missouri town of Times Beach. Read the passage. Then answer Numbers 1 through 10.

An Environmental Success Story

by Susan McCarty

In the early 1970s, the residents of Times Beach, Missouri, had a problem: dust. Dust was everywhere in their town. Dust coated houses. It got in the mouths and eyes of people walking or driving down the roads. Dust hung in the air like fog over the roads.

At the time, the town didn't have the money to pave the roads, so it hired a contractor named Russell Bliss. Bliss worked with the Northeastern Pharmaceutical and Chemical Company (NEPACCO) in Verona, Missouri. NEPACCO sold Bliss waste oil at a low cost. Waste oil is oil that has been used. It's no longer good for its original, intended purpose. For instance, when someone gets the oil changed in his or her car, that means the old, used oil is taken out and replaced with fresh oil to help the engine run better. The used oil is waste oil.

Bliss sprayed waste oil on the dusty roads in Times Beach. It seemed that the dust problem in Times Beach was solved. But another, far more dangerous problem would soon be discovered.

Before Bliss sprayed the roads in the town of Times Beach, he used the waste oil to help with the dust problem at a local horse stable. As you can imagine, horse stables get very

dusty. Horses and riders kick up dust constantly. After Bliss sprayed the horse stable, 62 horses in the stable died. The owners thought Bliss was at fault. He claimed the oil he sprayed was just used engine oil and couldn't have caused the death of so many animals.

He was wrong. What Bliss did not know or did not tell the owners was that his waste oil contained lethal amounts of dioxin, a toxic chemical that can cause cancer and other illnesses in humans. Bliss sprayed the roads in Times Beach with the toxic chemical for five years.

More horses died and children in the town became sick. Scientists suspected that the town had been polluted. Scientists from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) investigated. In 1982, the EPA announced that Times Beach was contaminated with dioxin. They told people to stay out of the town.

The contamination was so bad that the government decided to buy all the homes and businesses in Times Beach from the owners. The townspeople gathered and decided by a vote to dissolve the town of Times Beach. That means they decided the town would no longer exist. They packed their things and moved away.

Go On ►

In order to clean up the area, the EPA had to destroy the entire town and the land it stood on. The EPA burned more than 265,000 tons of poisoned soil from Times Beach.

Russell Bliss claimed that NEPACCO hadn't told him the waste oil was contaminated. NEPACCO claimed it had. In the end, the company that owned NEPACCO paid \$100 million to help the clean-up effort. Russell Bliss was never convicted of any crime. Apparently, it had all been a terrible mistake.

Right now, this probably sounds like the opposite of an environmental success story to you. You're right—the poisoning of Times Beach, Missouri, was the worst environmental disaster on American soil. It was the worst thing to happen to Missouri. I know, because my aunt and uncle used to live there. But do you know what's happened since the EPA burned the soil? An environmental miracle!

On the site of the former town of Times Beach there is now a beautiful, lush park. The Route 66 State Park opened in 1999. Route 66 was a famous interstate highway that used to run through Missouri. The park is the most beautiful in the state. It has 419 acres of trees, hiking trails, and open fields of wild grass. The park provides access to the Meramec River. Can you believe such an amazing place used to be so polluted?

Now, our understanding of the environment is better than it was in the 1970s. We have better technology. There are better laws to regulate the manufacturing of chemicals and the disposal of toxins. People are just smarter now than they were in the 1970s. There's no way that anything like the Times Beach tragedy could ever happen again.

* Decide which two you can cross out ⊗
Then debate with your partner which of
the remaining two
is correct. Go back
and look for
evidence.

1 What is the author's tone toward her topic?

- positive
- argumentative
- neutral
- negative

2 With which statement would the author most likely agree?

- The toxic effects of dioxin have been exaggerated for years.
- Russell Bliss should be in jail for poisoning the town.
- There is no need for laws against chemical dumping in Missouri.
- Because of science, we are better off today than we were 30 years ago.

3 Why does the author tell her readers about the Times Beach disaster?

- to inform others about the disaster and cleanup
- to argue that Times Beach should become a town again
- to persuade others to check for dioxin in their soil
- to describe how the EPA checks for pollution

4 Read the following sentence from the passage.

"Russell Bliss claimed that NEPACCO hadn't told him the waste oil was contaminated."

What does the word "contaminated" mean?

- on sale
- poisoned
- terrifying
- illegal

5 What is the purpose of the last paragraph?

- to summarize the main events of the story
- to explain the lesson learned in the story
- to give a glimpse of what is going to happen
- to convince readers they are safe from pollution

6 Read this line from the passage.

“Dust hung in the air like fog over the roads.”

What type of figurative language is this line an example of?

- hyperbole
- metaphor
- simile
- onomatopoeia

7 According to the passage, why did the government decide to buy the homes and businesses of Times Beach?

- to help the townspeople relocate to another home
- to help the townspeople rebuild after the cleanup
- to support the failing economy of Times Beach
- to take control of the way the town was run

8 What is this passage mostly about?

- how Times Beach was voted out of existence as a Missouri town
- how Times Beach was destroyed, and then rebuilt as a state park
- how Times Beach is responsible for most of the pollution in the Midwest
- how Times Beach tried to sue Russell Bliss and NEPACCO and lost

9 What type of propaganda does the author use near the end of the passage?

- scare tactics
- bandwagon effect
- circular thinking
- red herring

10 Is “An Environmental Success Story” an appropriate title for the passage? Use two details from the passage to explain why or why not.
