

Reading Response Passage:

The Mystery of the Crop Circle (page 1 of 4)

Opinion Piece by Diane Robitaille

What to Do

As you read, think about:

- making inferences to increase your understanding of the text
- identifying strong voice in writing
- the author's use of the generalization text pattern

I'm willing to believe in the UFO theory for crop circles.

What's a crop circle? Well, sometimes it's not even a circle. It's a shape or pattern (sometimes a circle, or possibly a series of circles, or triangles, squares, mathematical patterns, or letters) created in a field of wheat, barley, rye, corn, linseed, or soy. These crop circles have appeared across the world—Canada, the United States, Britain, Holland, Hungary, and Australia. The earliest recorded crop circle appeared in Holland in 1590. In the 1960s and 1970s, there were several reports about crop circles. In the early 1980s, news reports about crop circles increased as dozens of circles appeared each summer.

The big mystery is what or who created these patterns. *Most* crop circles have been proven to be hoaxes created by pranksters. For example, British artists Doug Bower and David Chorley confessed to creating about 250 circles using ropes, planks, hats, and wire.

What about the other crop circles? Some people believe that crop circles are messages from aliens trying to communicate with us. Is that possible? It's a hard theory to disprove. No positive proof about alien life forms has ever been provided. But neither has there ever been any actual proof that aliens don't exist. The universe is awfully immense. Who knows who might be travelling across it? This theory relies on belief, rather than scientific proof.

Still, many scientists suggest other more rational explanations for the existence of crop circles. Here are a few of the theories they've proposed:

1. Perhaps crop circles have been formed by something underground affecting the plant life above. For example, bombs that exploded on that site may have poisoned the ground, causing a crop circle to form years later.

2. Could these circles be created by animals? Maybe a few sheep or cows grazing in fields where they shouldn't be? Unfortunately, the evidence indicates otherwise—no animal hoof prints lead to or away from these sites. (And just think about it, if cows or sheep are creating perfect circles, triangles, squares, or complex mathematical patterns—wouldn't that frighten you more than the possibility of aliens visiting Earth?)
3. Perhaps the crop circle was created naturally by air currents? For example, a tornado may flatten crops. But a tornado couldn't flatten crops in any of the complicated patterns that have been reported.
4. Could a helicopter or other aircraft (human, *not* alien) have created the patterns, whether on purpose or by accident? Certainly aircraft could flatten crops, either with their downdraft or by landing on the site. Again, how could an aircraft create letters or other intricate patterns?
5. One theory even suggests that there are government agencies creating the more intricate patterns. But why? To make us all believe there really is other intelligent life out there? (Besides the whales and dolphins.) What greater purpose would that serve?

It is possible that *all* crop circles are fakes or hoaxes. Personally, I like to believe that just a few of those crop circles are created by UFOs. The patterns are often intricate and complicated, resembling hieroglyphs from an earlier age. Often strange lights are reported in the night sky at the time a crop circle is discovered.

Perhaps aliens are trying to communicate with us. Perhaps they're just having a laugh at our expense. Imagine alien teenage joy riders—out in their parents' spacecraft, having a lark, creating a few crop circles, scaring a few locals, and then returning home to giggle about how we'll look when we examine the images.

And we do examine the patterns closely...very closely. In the past few decades, humans have probably spent more time, energy, and money investigating and talking about the mystery of the crop circles than on other, more important mysteries—like how do we stop the polar ice caps from melting. Google *crop circles* and *melting polar ice caps*. Just see how many hits you get for each! I'm just hoping that one day, alien intervention can save us all. That's why I'm willing to believe in the UFO theory for crop circles.

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Do you think the author is serious about believing that crops circles are caused by aliens? Explain how you used making inferences to respond to this question.
2. Use the following organizer to record an inference that you made while reading “The Mystery of the Crop Circle.” Show how you used clues from the text and your own knowledge to form the inference.

Clues from the Text	+ Prior Knowledge	= Inference

3. a) In the organizer below, record the characteristics of the generalization text pattern and give an example of each from “The Mystery of the Crop Circle.”

Characteristic	Example from “The Mystery of the Crop Circle”

- b) How does knowing the text pattern help a reader to understand the text better?
- _____
- _____

4. a) Do you think the author has a strong voice in this text ? Identify examples from the text that support your opinion about the author’s voice. Use the back of the page for your response.
- b) Is the author’s voice appropriate for the purpose and audience of this text? Explain your thinking.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Circle the best response:

1. Which of the following definitions best explains the underlined idiom below?

“Imagine alien teenage joy riders—out in their parents’ spacecraft, having a lark, creating a few crop circles, scaring a few locals, and then returning home to giggle about how we’ll look when we examine the images.”

- exploring
- having some fun
- stealing
- travelling around

2. Which word from the sentence below can take the suffix *-ive* to create a new word?

“Some people believe that crop circles are messages from aliens trying to communicate with us.”

- crop
- people
- message
- communicate

3. Which irregular plural rule does the underlined word follow?

“It’s a hard theory to disprove.”

- add *-es*
- add *-s*
- change the *y* to an *i* and add *-es*
- the singular and the plural are the same

4. Identify the most descriptive word in this sentence.

“One theory even suggests that there are government agencies creating the more intricate patterns.”

- One
- theory
- goverment
- intricate