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Diagnostic Passage
Nelson Literacy Grade 7
Unit 3, Mysteries
Mothman!

- identifying the characteristics of generalization text pattern
- analyzing the writer's voice

Mothman!

Essay by Nic Hammond

Mothman sounds like a bad idea for a comic book about a buggy superhero, doesn't it?

Actually, Mothman is the name of a bizarre creature reported to live in remote areas of West Virginia, in the United States. The creature was first spotted around 1926 and has been spotted as recently as 2007. Some people believe the creature appears before a disaster and may even cause it.

What does the creature look like? The following description is put together from a variety of sightings: a tall—larger than a tall man—brown (or grey) figure with large wings and red, glowing eyes set into its chest (it is sometimes reported as having no head).

So, is it fact or fiction? Clearly, it's fiction!

Sure, something bizarre that has been spotted over such a stretch of time by so many people makes it unlikely to be just a hoax. On the other hand, clearly more *recent* sightings can be attributed to the movie (That's right, this creature has been immortalized in a freakish 2002 movie—look up *The Mothman Prophecies*.) and the Internet explosion of an idea that such a creature does exist.

Here's how that Internet explosion works: Put together a movie with all its generated publicity, and all of a sudden you have hundreds of thousands of people eager to believe there really is a bizarre alien creature. Soon they're spotting it all over the place. And they're convincing themselves and others that they really have spotted the creature.

Remember, they also believe that the Mothman is supposed to be a visitor from outer space interested in either saving our lives (if you believe it's warning us) or in destroying us (if you believe it's causing the disaster). Seriously, people, if an alien creature really bothered to come to Earth and wanted to warn us or destroy us—don't you think it would be able to do so more efficiently?

The movie is based on a book of the same name written in 1975 by John Keel. The book relates a rash of sightings of the Mothman in 1966 and 1967 in West Virginia to the collapse of a bridge that caused the death of 46 people. Most scientists question the facts related in the book. So don't be too quick to believe everything you read—or every Hollywood movie you watch!

Mothman doesn't exist? There is no photographic photo— making it hard to believe this creature really does exist.

Some people believe (the ones who don't believe the Mothman is an alien creature sent to Earth to help/destroy us) that witnesses of this Mothman may just be seeing a large *Earthly* bird (the Sandhill Crane is native to the area— it's a large bird with a wing span of more than two metres) late at night when their senses are susceptible to confusion.

So is the Mothman fact or fiction? Definitely and undoubtedly fiction!

However, does it matter? In my opinion, no, it doesn't. We take so much pleasure from these bizarre creatures— Loch Ness Monster, Big Foot (or Sasquatch), Yeti, and so on— that it doesn't matter whether they exist or not in reality. They exist in our imaginations for our imaginations. They become part of our world, part of the tapestry that makes life interesting and entertaining.

So read the book, watch the movie, visit a few Mothman websites and enjoy. Maybe someday you'll be inspired to create Mothman— the comic book.

Questions for “Mothman!”

Name _____ Date _____

1. What inferences do you make about the following topics by reading this essay?

Topic	Inference
reported sightings of Mothman	
aliens from outer space	
the power of media	

2. What inferences can you make about the writer's personality based on this essay?

ument this writer uses in his essay.

4. a. List the points in the essay that the writer uses to support his argument.
 b. List the point in the essay that the writer suggests opposes his argument.

Supporting Point	Opposing Point

5. Describe **two** writing techniques the writer uses to create a strong voice.

7. Give **two** examples of effective word choices and tell why these are effective.

8. What evidence is there in the essay that the writer knows his topic well?

9. How does making inferences help you analyze a writer's arguments?
