



**CUNYASSESSMENT TEST IN READING  
(CATR) Practice 1**

**“The Feared Octopus”**

**Read the passage below and then answer the multiple choice questions which follow. Check your answers with the answer key.**

The octopus’s reputation as a human-killer isn’t simply an exaggeration—it’s a total myth. The octopus can indeed be a deadly hunter, but it attacks only its natural prey. Clams, mussels, crabs, lobsters, and an occasional sick or unwary fish have reason to be frightened of this multi-armed predator, but a human being is much too large to interest even the largest octopus. Even a giant octopus is much smaller than most people imagine. Far from being large enough to engulf a submarine, as monster octopuses in movies have been known to do, the largest octopuses, which are found on the Pacific coast, weigh around 110 pounds and grow to a diameter of no more than 10 feet.

It is difficult to consider why so many people consider octopuses to be dangerous creatures. The hard beak of an octopus is not used for attacking deep-sea divers but for cutting open crabs and lobsters. Indeed, the octopus possesses such a tiny throat that it cannot even swallow large pieces of meat. It feeds instead by pouring digestive juices into its victims and then sucking up the soupy remains. A clam, oyster, or scallop that finds itself in the grasp of the octopus has only a short time to live. But human beings are perfectly safe around octopuses. Still, people rarely care to venture close enough to these timid underwater creatures to get a good look at them.

1. The main idea of this passage is
  - a. The octopus is not as dangerous as many people believe it to be.
  - b. The only enemy the octopus fears is the shark.
  - c. The octopus only hunts its natural prey.
  - d. People often fear creatures that are not dangerous to them.
  
2. The passage states that octopuses
  - a. use their eight tentacles to catch their prey.
  - b. always catch sick and careless fish.
  - c. never attack people.
  - d. can engulf submarines.
  
3. You would not expect octopuses to
  - a. kill clams.
  - b. approach divers underwater.
  - c. hide from danger.
  - d. suck up their prey.
  
4. Engulf means
  - a. surround.
  - b. beach.
  - c. kill.
  - d. out race.

## ANSWER KEY AND EXPLANATIONS

1. **A** is correct.

**B** is incorrect because it is irrelevant. The octopus's enemies are not mentioned in the passage.

**C** is incorrect. This is mentioned in the passage, but only in the first paragraph, and so it is too specific to be the main idea.

**D** is incorrect because it is too general. The passage is about why people need not be afraid of octopuses in particular.

2. **A** is incorrect because the passage does not mention whether or not octopuses use their tentacles to catch prey.

**B** is incorrect because the passage mentions that they *occasionally* catch sick and unwary fish, but it does not say that they *always* do so.

**C** is correct.

**D** is incorrect because the last sentence in the first paragraph specifically states that octopuses *cannot* engulf submarines.

3. **A** is incorrect because the passage states that clams are the octopus's natural prey.

**B** is correct.

**C** is incorrect because, as the last sentence of the passage describes octopuses as "timid," they might very well be expected to hide from danger.

**D** is incorrect because the second paragraph describes octopuses as doing exactly that – dissolving and then sucking up their prey.

4. **A** is correct.

**B** is incorrect. We can deduce this because no mention is made of submarines being beached.

**C** is incorrect. This can be deduced because submarines, not being alive, cannot be killed.

**D** is incorrect. This is evident because the sentence in which "engulfed" is used is discussing the octopus's *size*, not its *speed*.