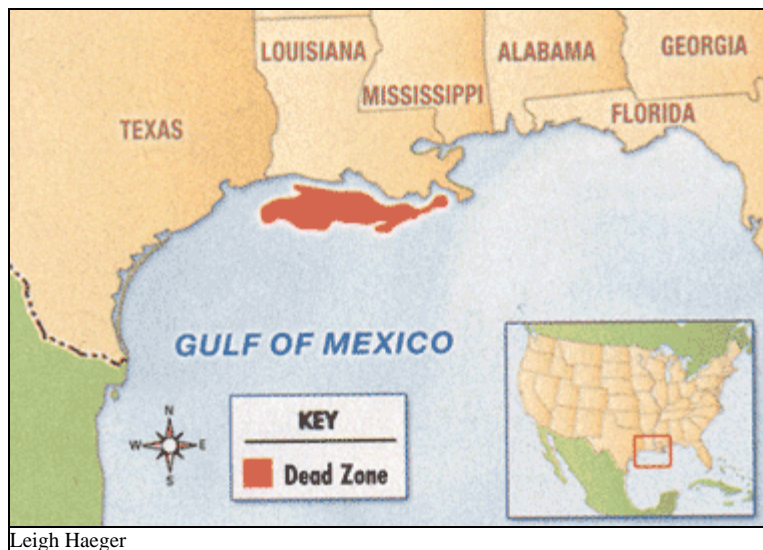


# Dead Zone

Each summer, a "dead zone" creeps across the waters of the Gulf of Mexico off the Texas coast. It's as scary as it sounds--if you're a fish. Spreading 5,000 square miles into the Gulf, the region is empty of life.

What causes the zone of death? Pollution. **Fertilizer**<sup>1</sup> from farms across the Midwest wash into the Mississippi River and flow into the Gulf of Mexico. The fertilizers feed tiny floating **algae**, organisms that make their own food using energy from the sun, as plants do. Huge blooms of algae erupt and use up all the oxygen in the water--oxygen that other sea creatures need to survive.

Some fish are able to swim out of the dead zone before it's too late--but everything else dies.



The Gulf's dead zone has appeared every summer for the last 30 years. A few years ago, however, scientists think the dead zone might have been responsible for shark attacks along Texas beaches. Scientists think the sharks came into shallow waters near the edge of the dead zone in search of food.

In the shallows, the toothy fish came in contact with human swimmers in the wrong place at the wrong time.

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<sup>1</sup> **fertilizer:** a substance used to make soil produce larger or more plant life

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do sea creatures depend on in the water in order to live?

- A fertilizer
- B algae
- C oxygen
- D sharks

2. According to the passage, which of the following *caused* the pollution in the dead zone?

- A a lack of oxygen in the water
- B swimmers
- C sharks near the shore
- D fertilizer from farms

3. You can conclude that if the dead zone didn't occur, then

- A there would be more algae in the water
- B sharks might not have swum near beaches
- C fish would stay clear of the area
- D fewer people would use the beaches

4. Read the following sentence from the passage: "Scientists think the sharks came into shallow waters near the edge of the dead zone in search of food."

In this sentence, the word **shallow** means

- A not deep
- B thin
- C hot
- D windy

5. The primary purpose of this passage is to

- A warn readers about shark attacks
- B describe what the dead zone is
- C encourage people to protect fish
- D teach people not to pollute water

6. Review the map. Which state is directly north of the dead zone?

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7. How might the dead zone be prevented from forming?

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

\_\_\_\_\_ the algae use up the oxygen in the water, sea creatures die.

- A Instead
- B After
- C Before
- D Yet

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

A few years ago, some swimmers were attacked by sharks in shallow waters along the coast of Texas.

Who? \_\_\_\_\_

(were) What? \_\_\_\_\_

Where? in shallow waters along the coast of Texas

When? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** region: area.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_