

# Module 3 ~ Why Manage Invasive Plants (UE)

## Reading Activity – Water Hyacinth in Florida – Then and Now



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Read this passage and answer the questions below.

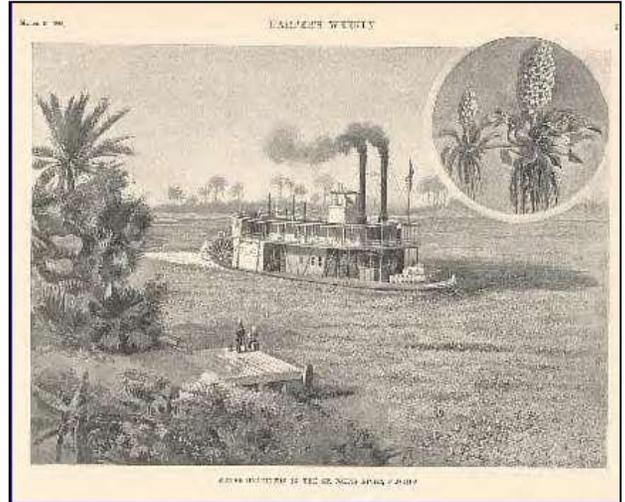
"**WATER HYACINTHS AREN'T SOMETHING WE HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THESE DAYS,**" said the fisherman while boating the St. Johns River. "Used to be I couldn't get my boat into the water, there were so many plants, but today there's not a problem."

The fisherman is only partly correct; he is able to get his boat into the river, because there are fewer water hyacinth plants now. But he's also incorrect, because we *do* have to worry about water hyacinths today.

Florida plant managers have been controlling water hyacinths for more than 100 years and succeeded in greatly reducing the number of these plants. So, for many people, the water hyacinths don't seem to be a problem at all.

They don't know that city, county, and state agencies in Florida spend over \$70 million dollars in plant management every year. Without this maintenance effort, our lakes, rivers, canals and wetlands would quickly be covered by invasive aquatic plants.

Today there are more than 100 non-native invasive aquatic and terrestrial plants on the loose in Florida waters and wetlands. Hydrilla, water hyacinth, melaleuca, and torpedo grass are very costly to control. Managing plants helps to protect Florida's natural environment and our tourism industry.



Water hyacinth plants infesting the St. Johns River in north Florida. This illustration was published in an 1898 issue of *Harper's Weekly* magazine. The author of the magazine article said, "I have seen vessels going at full speed brought to a complete standstill."

1. Are water hyacinths a problem in Florida today?
2. How much money does the state of Florida spend on removing problem plants each year?
3. How do you think water hyacinth plants affected Florida 100 years ago?

