

CONFESSIONS OF AN EXOTIC AQUATIC*

By Ruth Johnston, Board Member (modified by NRES 285 Students)
Geography Educators' Network of Indiana
Kouts, Indiana

Setting: The talk show "The Aquatic View"

Characters: Zelda, the Zebra Mussel (speaks with Russian accent)
Helga the Hydrilla (speaks with **major** southern drawl)
The Jonas Brothers (the interviewers)
Joe Jonas (J)
Nick Jonas (N)
Kevin Jonas (K)

Props: Zelda costume, feather boa (to create an exotic flair to Zelda)
Helga costume
Two chairs (optional)
Posters or specimens of the aquatic species to be discussed in the workshop
(for Jonas Brothers to point out as they are discussed)

J: Today on the **Aquatic View** our topic is "Confessions of an Exotic Aquatic." Our special guest is Zelda from the faraway Caspian Sea. She'll be revealing secrets and giving insights into the life of a zebra mussel.

N: And we all know Joe loves secrets.

J: How about your Miley secret?

Z: Hello, Dahling! It's mahvelous to see you! I have just finished a 2-veek cruise from my homeland in zee Caspian Sea, and I am thrilled to be on land.

K: Hmmm. But, Zelda, I understand that your type of "cruising" involves hitchhiking in the ballast tanks of ships.

Z: Ah Kevin, vell, yes zat is true. But zere is nussing like zee ocean spray in your face and snuggling up vis your closest family members and friends.

N: So how was it? Meet any celebrities?

Z: Not many celebrities on my part of the boat, but the food vas delish, filtered plankton my fav!

J: That sounds very interesting, Zelda. How about the parties?

Z: Vee bivalve mollusks really know how to live it up!

K: Speaking of living it up, I hear that you have been hanging around the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basin and basically taking over everything.

J: Yeah! And choking out the native species.

Z: Now, vait vone minute Jo bros! It's not my fault zat zey can't adapt to zee vay I live. Can I help it zat ships like to take me for cruises?

N: My, my, you are a bit touchy on this subject, aren't you, Zelda. Maybe you can tell us all about your adventures on the cruise. Did you meet anyone interesting?

Z: Ah, yes. First, I ran into zat Nasty Selena Sea Lamprey. Can you believe zat she actually attaches herself to fish? How unbelievably disgusting!

J: I heard that she attached herself to the hull of a boat to visit beautiful Lake Michigan. That sounds a bit more glamorous than in a ship's ballast tanks!

Z: Zat would be your opinion, vich I might add, is not mine. Sea Lampreys are offensive, slimy, eel-like creatures who lack discriminating tastes. Don't ever talk about us both in zee same breath ever again!

K: Okay, okay, I won't. So, who else did you run into on your journey?

Z: Oh, as I vas swimming down zee Mississippi, I did run into bighead and silver carp who vere heading upstream. Zey are so BEEG and have funny low-set eyes. And a bit crazy, I might add. Jumping out of zee water like, vell, like crazy! But zey are pretty awesome.

N: I don't believe I've met them.

K: Come on Nick, don't you remember? On our last fishing trip one jumped out and slapped you right in the face!

J: Yeah, we had to post pone our photo shoot for Seventeen!

N: Guys, you're embarrassing me!

Z: Are you boys done? I would like to get back to me. Zee carp haven't made it to zee Great Lakes yet. Zere's zis maddening electric barrier set up to stop zem. Can you imagine?

J: I hear they are also competing with the local fish for food and habitat.

Z: Zere you go again, focusing on zee negative!

K: You exotics really stick together, don't you?

Z: Vee do! But, you know, Jo Bros, vee did see some breathtakingly gorgeous foliage on our cruise. My favorite was zee Purple Loosestrife. I have heard zat it is on zee rampage, taking over many vetlands in North America!

N: Yes, that is also a huge problem! They are taking over the native cattail habitats.

K: And the wetland animals can't eat them or even use them for nesting or cover.

Z: But did you see how beautiful zay are? How could zat be a problem?

J: One plant can scatter 2 million seeds in one year. What will the native animals eat when this plant takes over?

Z: Maybe zay can learn to adapt, just like vee exotics.

K: Zelda, I understand that boats and water birds are bringing new species into the Midwest.

H (with a southern accent): Well now, speaking of coming to the Midwest, I think ah'm the latest

arrival. I just showed up last year in Lake Manitou in northern Indiana.

N: And who might **you** be?

H: Why, I'm Helga the Hydrilla, can't you **tell**? I look a lot like the native aquatic plant elodea, but I have some **very** special features. I have four or more leaves around ma stawlk with tiny little spines on the underside.

J: I see. So did you come from the Caspian Sea, too?

H: Why ma goodness no. My family's originally from Kohreah, but I've been livin' and thrivin' in the suthern U.S. for some yeahs now. Y'all know how well things grow down there. But I heard that the Great Lakes region has some pretty hospitable habitat, too. So I decided to come up heah and check it out. I think it would be just great to settle in around Lake St. Clair or Saginaw Bay or even one of those thousands of inland lakes!

K: But wouldn't the cold winters kill you?

H: Oh, I don't think so. Some of ma family's doin' right well in Maine and Massachusetts. Besides, ah've got lots of ways to reproduce. Why, I have a flower, and if somebody breaks off just a tinee fragment, Ah'll sprout a whole new plant. Ah also have a tooreawn (turion) that looks kinda like a miniature pine cone. But the best of all is ma toobahs (tubers) that buries themselves in the boddum and shoots out runnuhs so that ah can suhvide from one yeeah to the next.

N: Well, now I can understand why Michigan's outlawed you and a bunch of other exotic species.

J: You all would probably take over the whole aquatic environment if people didn't take steps to prevent or get rid of you.

[Zelda returns and links "arms" with Helga.]

Zelda speaks on their behalf.

Vee both zought you wanted an interview, Jo Bros, not a nit-picking, gripe session! You are doing nussing but pointing out serious problems. If vee wanted to get into a fight, vee vould give Jerry Springer a call! Now, I don't zink vee vill ever be able to vork togezer again. Good-bye! *(She and Helga stomp off)*

J: Thank you Zelda, the Zebra Mussel and Helga, the Hydrilla.

K: We hope to see **less and less of you two and your invasive friends** in the future.

N: But we hope to see more of us hanging up in your lockers!



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