

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade – Opinion

### Prompt:

Write an essay in which you give your opinion about whether national parks in Alaska or Florida would be better to visit. Use information from the passages in your essay **to support your opinion.**

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

**Write your essay in the space provided.**

You have one class period to read, plan, write, revise and edit your essay.

### Passage 1:

## ALASKA NATIONAL PARKS

Alaska is by far the largest state in the American union, and it is also the least densely populated. Herds of caribou, an endangered species, outnumber people here two to one. We're taking you to two of the most beautiful parks Alaska has to offer, filled with terrestrial wildlife, marine animals, glaciers and spectacular views.

### Wrangell St. Elias National Park

Nestled in Alaska's southeastern corner, Wrangell St. Elias National Park is the country's largest national park. Located along the Pacific Ring of Fire, it's home to one of Alaska's great volcanic mountain ranges, the Wrangell Mountains -- an area covering 4,000 square miles. That's roughly the size of Connecticut.

### **Must-See List**

-- For those who want spectacular views without lacing up their hiking boots, take the Edgerton Highway to the Liberty Falls Trail, and enjoy a panorama of the park's high peaks.

-- Wrangell offers experienced outdoor enthusiasts unparalleled opportunities for exploration. Hiking is a serious game on the park's namesake, Mt. Elias, which stands 18,008 feet above sea level, making it the second-highest peak in the United States (second only to Alaska's Mt. McKinley). Visitors to the park are let loose among this wild. Park Rangers at the visitors' center will give you maps, terrain knowledge, safety tips and then you're on your own.

-- At Wrangell, most of the park is inaccessible unless you have a plane. Unlike other national parks, there aren't multiple access roads or campgrounds leading into Wrangell. The terrain is rugged -- so to see the best of the park, we recommend seeing it by one of the park's many air taxis.

-- During the summer months, park rangers offer guided tours. The park has more hiking and backpacking, mountain biking, fishing and river trips than Alaska has winter days. Since more than 25% of the park is covered in glaciers, make sure to take in the majesty of Nabesna Glacier, Bagley Icefield, Malaspina Glacier or Hubbard Glacier.

### **Glacier Bay National Park**

Glacier Bay National Park is 3.3 million acres of coastal rain forests and mountains surrounding a huge pristine bay. In addition to providing stunning landscapes, this park is a maritime sanctuary, therefore, the best way to experience Glacier Bay is not by plane, it's by boat.

### **Must-See List**

-- There are several ways to explore this park by boat: cruise ships and tour vessels being the most common. If you're not on a cruise ship, the tour vessels hold up to 400 passengers and are guided by a National Park Service Naturalist. On your tour, make sure you see the Margerie Glacier. When rivers of ice descend from the mountains above, you will see this glacier "calving" -- growing, at the rate of up to ten feet a day.

-- At Bartlett Cove the animals, plants and landscape are continuously changing. That's because

just 200 years ago it was home to the snout of a 100-mile long glacier. You can hike the cove on your own, with a small group, or as part of a guided hike.

-- For the ultimate outdoorsmen, Glacier Bay offers wilderness adventures. Camping, hiking, backpacking and kayaking are just a few of the activities offered.

*Taken from: The Travel Channel-Road Trips*

## **Passage 2:**

### **FLORIDA NATIONAL PARKS**

Florida has long been a population destination for tourists, especially in the winter when people in the north want to escape the cold weather. While there are several national parks in the state, these two offer exceptional opportunities to experience wildlife and gain knowledge of the history in the state.

#### **Big Cypress National Preserve**

One of the nation's first established preserves, Big Cypress Swamp encompasses more than 700,000 fresh water acres that support a dizzying array of wildlife, from alligators and great white heron to black bears and the famed Florida panther.

The natural bounty of the swamp attracted American Indian tribes, including the Miccosukee and Seminole, as well as early Spanish settlers.

Following the completion of the Tamiami Trail in 1928, a road that connects Tampa and Miami, loggers moved in to harvest this massive cypress forest. Historians are just beginning to document the contributions of the African Americans who built the road and worked in the sawmills.

Considered by many to be "Florida's backyard," the Big Cypress Swamp offers a variety of recreational and educational activities, including ranger walks, hiking, and hunting. Off-road vehicles and airboats allow visitors to explore the park's depths.

Get oriented at the Oasis Visitor Center, where you'll find informative displays and educational guides to the history and natural resources of the region.

### **If You Go**

The Florida Trail winds through Big Cypress Swamp. Less ambitious hikers can take a one-mile walk around the Kirby Storter Boardwalk – alone or led by a ranger – and get a closer look at native plants, birds, fish, otters and other wildlife.

### **Gulf Islands National Seashore**

Gulf Islands National Seashore spreads across two island chains off the coast of Mississippi and Florida's panhandle. These scenic out-islands offer historic forts, white sand beaches, and endless opportunities to learn and play.

Military historians will find much to see and do at the Fort Barrancas Visitor Center, Fort Pickens, Pensacola Naval Air Station, and the Naval Live Oaks Visitor Center. The park's forts were built over a span of nearly 150 years; several were built as part of the Third System of Coastal Fortifications, a defensive system constructed between 1816 and 1867.

Outdoor enthusiasts can camp, fish, swim, snorkel, hike, bike, and bird watch along miles of pristine shoreline. The Andrew Jackson Trail is one of nine trails leading out of Naval Live Oaks, which also offers a 40-mile biking loop.

In the Mississippi District of the park, the Davis Bayou Area offers a boat launch and hiking trails. Swimmers should head to West Ship Island, Santa Rosa Sound, Okaloosa Day Use Area, or Perdido Key.

### **Did You Know:**

More than 80 percent of Gulf Islands National Seashore is underwater. Shallow pools provide habitat for a wide variety of sea creatures and migratory waterfowl.

*Taken from: National Parks Conservation Association-Big Cypress National Preserve*