

# Mentor Text

The Mentor Text below was written by Kaiden Griggs and was awarded Finalist in the 2023 826 Digital Writers' Showcase.

## **The Egg Dozen Dilemma**

by Kaiden Griggs, Grade 6

“Egg prices in December rose 60% from a year earlier, according to Consumer Price Index data released Thursday.”

“Eggs had the biggest price jump of any single food item over the last year. The average cost increased 60%.”

These are snippets from the recent news concerning the price of eggs. Bacon, gas, and many other consumables have seen a price spike as well in 2022. And it didn't take an economist to figure that one out. No matter where you live, if you went to a grocery store throughout 2022, you would know virtually everything got more expensive. But one thing in particular went up in price: eggs. The main reason eggs especially have gotten more expensive is because of a recent outbreak in avian flu. Avian flu is a quite horrifying way for a chicken to go. Signs of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) are gasping and other respiratory problems, extreme diarrhea, but the flu hits every organ in the poor chicken's body and within a few days your chicken's turkey is cooked. The mortality rate for HPAI is the same as the septicemic plague for people, at 95%. As the Denver news headline puts it, “Avian Flu Is Making Life Quite Sh\*\*\*y for Birds in Colorado”. With all those GI problems, quite literally.

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Yes, it does affect geese and other birds, but it mainly strikes chickens because farm animals live their whole lives in close proximity to hundreds of other chickens. This disease is so contagious that infected chickens must be dealt with within less than a day, otherwise the whole entire farm will be turned into nuggets, not omelets. These farms are also so densely populated that the feces and saliva of one chicken can make it to the other side of the farm within a day.

The problem is, there is no effective and cheap prevention for HPAI. Even if there was, the profit per chicken is so low that the half-effective treatment itself would cost more than the chicken's weight in scrambled eggs.

However, eggs are very important to American culture. What will we ever eat for breakfast if we can't afford eggs with our bacon? The average American eats an egg every almost single day, so we have to find a solution, or else our breakfast is toast, figuratively and literally. The cheapest and most effective strategy adopted by the industry is culling. Culling is just selective slaughtering, often the whole flock when a case is detected. It is very effective and necessary, but takes a chunk out of your wallet. However, trying to only kill infected chickens is much harder. Symptoms are hard to detect early on, especially on larger scale farms. Plus the disease can go undetected for days, so individual slaughter is out of the question.

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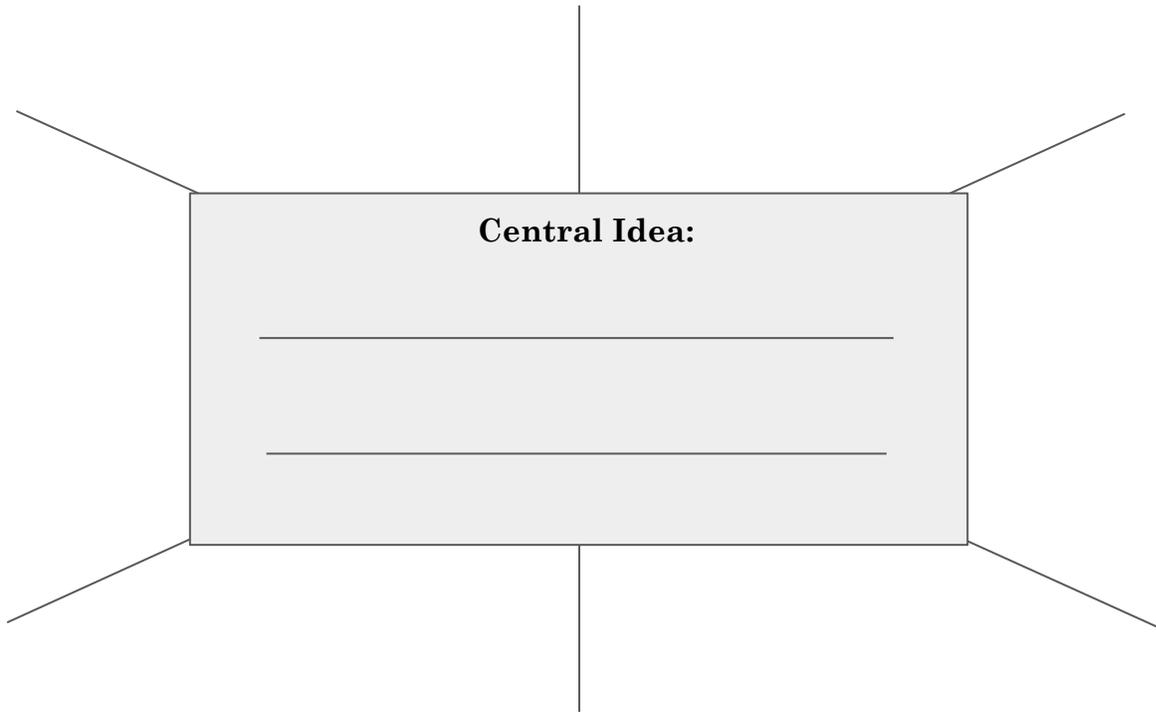
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Technically, the best way to prevent HPAI in the first place is plain social distancing. But the basic requirements for the amount of space chickens need is a 2 x 2 foot box, less than half the size of the average American bathtub, or just about the same size as a bathroom sink. So obviously giving a more medically reasonable amount of space is just too expensive without our help.

For now, as consumers, we oughta have higher eggs-pectations for the safety of the chickens. In the meantime, let's stop by Wendy's and have some chicken nuggets!

# Supporting Details

Reread the Mentor Text and underline 4-6 key details that support the main idea. These are the facts and quotations that you think are the most important. Then, write the main idea in the grey box below, and write the details you underlined by the lines around the main idea.



**Central Idea:**

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