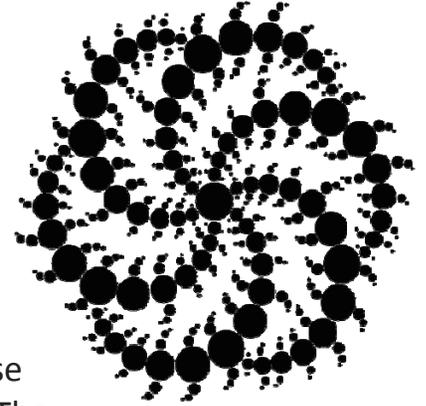


Crop Circles



DIRECTIONS: Read the passage. Identify the central idea. Then write a short summary.

A crop circle is a large pattern that is caused by the flattening of a cereal or grass crop. These formations are usually intricate and beautiful, and have a set of characteristics in common. They almost always involve circles, though they are also sometimes called crop formations since not all such patterns are circular. They are only ever formed overnight, and then discovered in the morning. Their formation has never been caught on camera, and most crop circles show little or no signs of human contact. Crop circles usually appear in fields that have easy access to roads, rather than in remote, inaccessible areas.

The first crop circles began appearing in the English countryside in the 1970s. Over the next twenty years, more and more appeared after that, becoming increasingly complex and elaborate. While crop circles are a mystery, they are a different caliber of mystery than, say, UFOs or Bigfoot, because there is no doubt that they are real. The mystery is what creates them.

People have come up with many theories. Some people think they are the result of very localized and precise wind patterns, or of energy fields and meridians called ley lines that cannot be detected by even modern scientific equipment. Others think that the crop circles are clear evidence of extraterrestrials; still others think that the intelligence behind the patterns is caused by some global psychic power. But in September 1991, two men confessed that they had been creating the patterns for decades as a joke – hoping to convince people that UFOs had landed. Apparently they were not responsible for all of the crop circles, though; there were many copycat pranks. That said, researchers claim that a small percentage of crop circles still cannot be explained, though there is no definitively scientific way to distinguish “real” crop circles from the hoaxes. If there are “real” crop circles, there is no good evidence as to what causes them, and for the time being they can best be considered a large-scale public art form.

Central Idea: _____