



Name _____

Date _____

DESERT TORTOISE

The desert tortoise gets its name because it lives in the desert. This means that the tortoise has to adapt to live in an arid, hot climate. Its habitat can be found in Southern California, Nevada, Arizona, and in parts of Mexico. Just like turtles, the desert tortoise has a shell that is usually brown and tan in color and is very hard. The shell can be anywhere from 8–15 feet long. The tortoise's body is not designed to swim (like a turtle's body is).

You may wonder how the tortoise can survive the extreme heat. The desert tortoise can handle up to 140-degree temperatures by burrowing itself into the ground to escape the heat. The desert tortoise spends most of its life in a burrow. It makes a hissing or a popping sound when it is afraid.

The desert tortoise eats herbs, grasses, and the new growth of cacti. The flowers of the cactus are eaten as well. This animal is more active during the daytime—especially in the early morning and early evening. It can live to be 50–80 years old! That is old for an animal. The tortoise hatches its young from eggs. The temperature actually determines whether it will be a male or female tortoise. The desert tortoise is endangered. Let's do what we can to protect this interesting animal!

STORY QUESTIONS

1. Compared to the turtle, the desert tortoise can . . .
 - a. withstand extreme heat.
 - b. swim in the water.
 - c. grow a hard shell.
 - d. hatch their young from eggs.
2. The word *cacti* is the plural form of . . .
 - a. extreme temperature.
 - b. caterpillar.
 - c. cactus.
 - d. cactus flowers.
3. Why do you think the shell is so important to the tortoise?
 - a. It prevents it from getting wet.
 - b. It helps the tortoise move quickly.
 - c. It stores food.
 - d. It serves as a protection.
4. A synonym for *arid* (which is found in the first paragraph) is . . .
 - a. high in the sky.
 - b. dry and parched.
 - c. protected.
 - d. endangered.



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CLOWN FISH

Did you know that a clown lives in the ocean? That's right. The clown fish lives in the ocean. The clown fish gets its name because it looks like it has a clown face painted on to its face. It's not really makeup or paint; it's just how the clown fish looks. The well-known clown fish is colored bright orange and white. There are other types of clown fish that come in different bright colors.

The coloring of the clown fish makes it easy for its enemy to spot it. In order to stay safe, the clown fish hides inside the "branches" of the sea anemone. The sea anemone looks like a small bush in the ocean. The branches of the sea anemone are poisonous. The tentacles can sting the fish. You may wonder how the clown fish keeps from getting hurt. The answer is that the clown fish is unaffected by the venom of the sea anemone. It is the only fish like this.

What does the clown fish eat? The clown fish eats zooplankton. Zooplankton are very tiny animals that float around in the seawater. Sometimes they are so small that you cannot see them without a microscope.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. When do you think a clown fish would leave the sea anemone's tentacles?
 - a. to seek food
 - b. to seek safety
 - c. to chase away its enemy
 - d. to recover from the poison of the sea anemone
2. Which statement is true?
 - a. The sea anemone is related to the clown fish.
 - b. The clown fish must be careful to avoid the anemone's tentacles.
 - c. Most of the animals that eat sea anemone eat clown fish as well.
 - d. Clown fish are brightly-colored fish.
3. In this passage, the word *unaffected* means . . .
 - a. unchanged.
 - b. unharmed.
 - c. killed instantly.
 - d. unchallenged.



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THE MOUNTAIN LION

Just hearing the name of this animal brings fear to many people. The mountain lion has many names. You may recognize some of them, such as cougar, puma, and panther. The mountain lion is a magnificent hunter with grace and speed. Deer is the main prey of the mountain lion, as it eats about one deer a week. The mountain lion eats the deer and then goes to rest while the food digests. The mother mountain lion teaches her babies to hunt by practicing on rodents and rabbits.

The mountain lion makes its home in foothills, canyons, or mesa country. They live in brushy areas and woodlands where they can go unseen. Because people are starting to build homes up in these areas, there are more and more contacts with the mountain lion.

What should you do if you see a mountain lion in the wild? Experts say that you should not run. They say that if you run, you will look weak and like an animal worth chasing. You should remain calm and slowly back away.

What does a mountain lion look like? The mountain lion is usually light tan or light cinnamon-colored with black-tipped ears. It also has a very long tail. The larger lions weigh about 150 pounds and can get as long as 8 feet. This is not an animal to approach in the wild.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. A likely reason people are fascinated with the mountain lion is because . . .
 - a. it is a fearless hunter.
 - b. it can get as heavy as 150 pounds.
 - c. it is called by a variety of names.
 - d. it teaches its young to hunt rodents and rabbits.
2. Another word for *prey* is . . .
 - a. prayer.
 - b. characteristic.
 - c. hunted.
 - d. diet.
3. Why does the name “mountain lion” connote the feeling of fear?
 - a. probably because the mountain lion lives near humans
 - b. perhaps because the mountain lion is endangered
 - c. probably because humans have been attacked by these amazing hunters
 - d. because humans hunt the mountain lion
4. The mountain lion has different names, such as the . . .
 - a. jaguar.
 - b. puma.
 - c. lynx.



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GECKO LIZARDS

Gecko lizards are part of the reptile family. The definition of a reptile is a cold-blooded animal that creeps by moving on the belly or by means of small and short legs. Did you know that a gecko lizard is the only lizard that has a voice? That's right. A gecko lizard makes a squeaking or clicking noise that sounds like "gecko." That's how the lizard got its name. Gecko lizards are nocturnal, which means that they are active during the night. This is why they have excellent vision.

Gecko lizards have sticky toe pads that allow them to climb well even on smooth surfaces. There is a type of gecko lizard that can fly through the air. These are called "flying geckos." These lizards have a flap of skin on the abdomen, which works like a bird's wing.

Gecko lizards can grow to be 14 inches long! The wide tail of the lizard helps store fat. The lizard has a long tongue that it uses to clean itself—especially the membrane that covers its eyes. These lizards are carnivores, which means that they eat meat. Crickets and cockroaches are a big part of its diet, but a gecko lizard will also eat young birds, eggs, and tiny mammals out at night. The snake is the main predator of the gecko lizard. If it is caught by the tail, the gecko lizard will let its tail go. The tail will flop and flail as the lizard gets away. The lizard will eventually grow another tail.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. How did the gecko lizard get its name?
 - a. its spotted back
 - b. by the sound it makes
 - c. where the gecko lizard lives
 - d. the manner in which it eats
2. What is the meaning of the word *carnivore*?
 - a. meat eater
 - b. other lizards
 - c. rodents and small mammals
 - d. plant eater
3. How does the flap of skin help the flying lizard fly?
 - a. It fights gravity.
 - b. It emits a powerful force.
 - c. It emits an odor in defense.
 - d. It works similarly to a wing on a bird.
4. After reading the passage, which reptile below would you guess is most like the gecko lizard?
 - a. snake
 - b. horny toad
 - c. tortoise



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THE JELLYFISH

Jellyfish are animals that live in water. Some jellyfish can live in fresh water, but most live in the ocean. The jellyfish is a mysterious animal. The jellyfish has a long body with long tentacles. These long tentacles are poisonous, and they sting. Some of the deadlier jellyfish have venom that can kill a human. The sunfish and the sea turtle eat the jellyfish and can do so without being harmed. The jellyfish eats mainly zooplankton and small shrimp in the ocean.

The jellyfish is made up of mostly water. In fact, 98% of the jellyfish is water. The smallest jellyfish are just a few inches long, while the largest jellyfish can be up to three feet long. The jellyfish gets its name from the jelly-like feel of the body.

Their jelly-like bodies are clear or sometimes have a pale coloring of blue, orange, brown, white, or pink. Some jellyfish may also come in other colors of deep yellow, deep blue, bright purple, pale lilac, bright orange, and deep red. If disturbed at night, some jellyfish give off a bright light. This makes them look like they glow in the dark.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. Why does the author say that jellyfish are mysterious animals?
 - a. They eat zooplankton.
 - b. They are related to the sea anemone.
 - c. They have unique bodies and they have a harmful sting.
 - d. They are made up of mostly water.
2. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
 - a. the diet of the jellyfish
 - b. the enemies of the jellyfish
 - c. the color of the jellyfish
 - d. the makeup of the jellyfish
3. What is the meaning of the word *disturbed* in the third paragraph?
 - a. settled
 - b. unconcerned
 - c. bothered
 - d. mentally unsettled
4. Most jellyfish live in the ocean, but where are some jellyfish found?
 - a. in fresh water
 - b. in the Indian Ocean
 - c. in the sea
 - d. in Niagara Falls