Check these words

- *capture imagination* • *millennia*
- *feature* • *folklore* • *evolve* • *survive*
- *body structure* • *function* • *peculiar*
- *pouch* • *scales* • *resemble*
- *chameleon* • *shellfish* • *gills*
- *shallow waters* • *attached (to)*
- *seaweed* • *wrap* • *stem*
- *sweep (away)* • *current* • *suck (up)*
- *pipefish* • *pregnant* • *fertilise*
- *mate* • *grave danger*
- *exceptionally limited*
- *distribution range* • *estuary*
- *conserve*

Quizlet

2a Reading



1 **b) Check the words below in the Word List. Use them to describe the fish's peculiar appearance.**

- horse-like head
- tiny eyes
- long pointed nose
- pouch
- sharp spikes
- no limbs
- bony plates
- no scales
- gills
- long curved tail
- fins

LIVEWORKSHEETS

UNIQUE
UNDERWATER CREATURES

A Seahorses are beautiful and unusual fish that have captured the imagination of writers and artists for millennia, and which feature in the ancient mythology, legends and folklore of many countries. Seahorses seem so magical that, to this very day, many people still believe they only exist in children's stories. But the fact is, these delicate and shy little creatures are very real!

B Scientists believe seahorses evolved at least 40 million years ago, and have survived from ancient times with only very small changes in their body structure and function. Seahorses have a peculiar appearance. They have a head like a horse, a pouch like a kangaroo, and a long, curved tail like a monkey. Their little bodies are covered in bony plates, not scales, and their tiny eyes resemble a chameleon's. Because of their confusing anatomy, for many years, people didn't know whether seahorses were a fish, an insect or a shellfish! Today, scientists know without a doubt that seahorses are fish because they have gills, a swim bladder and fins.

C Seahorses live mostly in shallow, warm waters. They are not strong swimmers, using only a back fin and a pair of tiny fins behind their eyes to push them through the water. Seahorses spend a lot of time attached to seaweed or sea grass. They are able to hang on to sea grass and seaweed by wrapping their tails around the stems, which helps them to avoid being swept away by strong currents. While they hang from sea grass, their long, tube-like mouth, which has no teeth, acts like a hoover for food, sucking up plankton. Strangely, seahorses have no stomach so they can't store their food. This means they have to eat fairly continuously throughout the day.

D Another unique characteristic of seahorses is that they (along with their cousins, the pipefish) are the only creatures in the animal kingdom where the male, not the female, becomes pregnant and gives birth to babies! The female produces eggs and places them in a pouch inside the male, where they are fertilised. The male gives birth to between 5 and 200 young. Amazingly, just a few hours after the male gives birth, the female will once again place eggs in the male's pouch. What's more it will be the same female because seahorses mate for life!

E Sadly, seahorses are in danger all over the world. Their habitats are being destroyed by human activities. People catch seahorses for pets and for souvenirs. In Asia, people believe seahorses have magical powers so they are used in traditional Chinese medicine. The most endangered seahorse in the world is the Knysna seahorse, which is only found in South Africa. The reason it is in grave danger is that it has an exceptionally limited distribution range – it is only found in three estuaries in the whole of South Africa. Unless these estuaries are conserved, South Africa will lose its only seahorse species for good.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3 **Choose the best answer according to the text. Give reasons for your answers.** CHECK

1 Some people are convinced that seahorses
- **A** are too small and timid to survive.
- **B** are imaginary creatures.
- **C** should feature in more children's stories.
- **D** have the ability to perform magic.

2 Scientists believe modern-day seahorses
- **A** look very similar to prehistoric seahorses.
- **B** are able to change their body structure.
- **C** may be related to the chameleon.
- **D** have poor eyesight.

3 Seahorses attach themselves to seaweed and sea grass
- **A** in order to eat it.
- **B** using their mouths and tails.
- **C** to stay safe in rough waters.
- **D** when they want to travel long distances.

4 Eating for seahorses
- **A** is difficult as they don't have teeth.
- **B** takes up a lot of their time.
- **C** involves storing plankton in their bodies.
- **D** requires them to chew continuously.

5 When it comes to reproduction, seahorses
- **A** like to mate with as many different seahorses as possible.
- **B** are the only fish whose males give birth.
- **C** are pregnant more or less continuously.
- **D** give birth to very small numbers of young.

6 The Knysna seahorse
- **A** is the rarest of South Africa's three seashores species.
- **B** is used as medicine in some cultures.
- **C** is found throughout South Africa.
- **D** is in more danger than any other seahorse species.

4 **Now, answer the questions in your own words.**

? **1** What characteristics make seahorses fish?

? **2** How do seahorses reproduce?

? **3** Why is the Knysna seahorse an endangered species?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Complete the summary.
Use these words: CHECK

curved | mate | bony
currents | gives | shallow
store | catch | peculiar
lost | attach | places
grave

Seahorses are fish with a **1)** _____ appearance. They have a **2)** _____ tail and **3)** _____ plates. They live in **4)** _____ warm waters. They can't swim well so they **5)** _____ themselves to seaweed so that strong **6)** _____ won't sweep them away. They eat most of the time because they have no stomach to **7)** _____ food. The male seahorse **8)** _____ birth to babies. The female **9)** _____ the eggs in the male's pouch. Seahorses **10)** _____ for life. Unfortunately, they are in danger because people **11)** _____ them for pets or souvenirs. The Knysna seahorse is in **12)** _____ danger. If we don't protect it, this species will be **13)** _____ for good.

Did you Know?

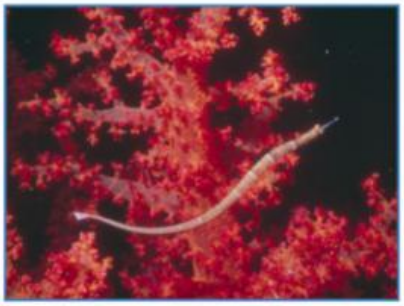
Less than 1% of young seahorses make it to adulthood.

Complete the text with the words below. CHECK

eggs | pouch | reefs | tails | fins
species | like | bodies | peculiar | strong

The Pipefish

Pipefish are fish with a **1)** _____ appearance. They look similar to seahorses as they have got long, thin **2)** _____ with long **3)** _____ and small mouths. They have the traits that ensure they are a fish **4)** _____ : gills and **5)** _____ . Most pipefish are not **6)** _____ swimmers and live in warm waters among coral **7)** _____ or seagrass beds. **8)** _____ seahorses, male pipefish are responsible for carrying **9)** _____ in a special **10)** _____ until the young pipefish are born.



LIVEWORKSHEETS