



Name _____

Date _____

SALAMANDERS

Salamanders are slender amphibians with short legs and long tails. Because of their moist skin, salamanders need to live near water or in moist ground. Most salamanders live in a forest habitat. Different species of salamanders need different amounts of water. Some spend their entire time in the water, while others will visit water intermittently.

Salamanders look a lot like lizards except they do not have scales. Most salamanders are small, but some rare species of salamanders can get up to five feet in length. The salamander has a very long tail. If the salamander loses its tail or leg, it will grow back. As the salamander matures, it will shed its skin.

A salamander begins its life as an egg in the water. The egg hatches to form a larva. The larva breathes with gills and swims. As the larva continues to mature, it will form lungs and begin to breathe air. This allows the salamander to live on the land. The salamander never travels far from where it is born because it is so dependent on the water to survive. The salamander is a predator and eats insects, snails, slugs, small fish, and worms.

Because of their moist skin, salamanders must live near water to avoid drying out. Most salamanders are active in the nighttime. This means they are nocturnal animals. On sunny days they will generally hide under logs or other hiding places to avoid the sun. Salamanders are harmless to people. They do not bite, nor do they have poison.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of the word *intermittently* as used in this passage?
 - a. too much
 - b. regularly
 - c. sporadically
 - d. often
2. According to this passage, salamanders need water because of their . . .
 - a. weight.
 - b. habitat.
 - c. mating instincts.
 - d. moist skin.
3. You can conclude that a salamander would probably do well living in . . .
 - a. the Sonoran Desert.
 - b. the high mountain tops.
 - c. dry land with plenty of bushes.
 - d. moist forest land.



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PUFFER FISH

There are over 120 different species of puffer fish. These fish are found typically in tropical and subtropical waters. They are found in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. Another name for the puffer fish is the blowfish or the globefish. The puffer fish inflates itself with either water or air as a form of protection. When inflated, it is difficult for predators to swallow them. They can puff themselves up because they have elastic skin and no ribs.

The teeth of the puffer fish are so sharp that they could sever a finger. The upper and lower jaws of the puffer fish are fused together. The puffer fish uses its beak-like teeth to prey on coral and hard-shelled animals. They blend in with the coral and like to live on the bottom of the ocean. They feed on mollusks and crustaceans. The puffer fish grows to be about 50 cm long.

The puffer fish is fatally poisonous. This is unusual because humans actually eat puffer fish. In Japan they are considered a delicacy. Even though the poison is removed, some people still die after eating them.

Puffer fish are some of the few fish known to close and blink their eyes. Scientists have observed dolphins using puffer fish as a sort of toy in the wild. The dolphin irritates the puffer fish so that it will inflate. Some species of puffer fish are territorial and aggressive.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. In this passage, the word *territorial* means . . .
 - a. to mock.
 - b. to imitate.
 - c. patronizing.
 - d. protective.
2. Which statement is false?
 - a. The puffer fish is poisonous.
 - b. The puffer fish can blink its eyes.
 - c. The puffer fish mimics a blown up ball.
 - d. The puffer fish is a good aquarium fish.
3. The puffer fish is also known as the . . .
 - a. blow fish.
 - b. globe fish.
 - c. blowfish or globefish.
 - d. ballfish



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THE SILKWORM

The silkworm is actually the larva of a moth. This interesting creature changed the way fabric was used and clothes were made. The silkworm received its name because it literally produces silk. As it spins its cocoon, it weaves a long piece of raw silk. This single continuous piece of silk can be as long as 900 meters. The fibers of this piece of silk are very fine.

The silkworm was discovered in China and Persia over 4,000 ago. Today, over 70 million pounds of silk are produced each year. The silkworm's diet consists of only mulberry leaves. The silkworm is a voracious eater, eating mulberry leaves day and night. This causes the silkworm to grow very quickly.

A silkworm spins a cocoon of silk threads around itself. Before the moth hatches from the cocoon, the cocoon is thrown into boiling water. If the moth comes out of the cocoon on its own, it will break the silk and it will be deemed useless. Each cocoon holds between 500 and 1200 yards of silk. That is a lot of silk from one cocoon!

The story of how silk was discovered tells of a Chinese empress who was drinking tea under a mulberry tree. One of the cocoons fell into the tea. She noticed the uncoiling of the cocoon. This silk thread was soon used in weaving and fabrics. Silk became a huge part of the Chinese economy as a result of this. The Chinese would trade fine silk with the rest of the world. How the silk was produced remained a secret for many years.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following statements is an opinion?
 - a. The silkworm produces a long strand of silk.
 - b. The silk from the silkworm was discovered in China.
 - c. A Chinese empress is credited with discovering silk.
 - d. It was smart of the Chinese to keep the silk a secret.
2. Which paragraph provides information about when silk was discovered?
 - a. first paragraph
 - b. second paragraph
 - c. third paragraph
 - d. fourth paragraph
3. A synonym for the word *literally* in the first paragraph is . . .
 - a. factually.
 - b. insistently.
 - c. encouragingly.
 - d. ordinarily.



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BLACK WIDOWS

One of the most feared spiders is the black widow. It is not only the unusual name but also the fear of being bitten by a black widow. There is good reason for this fear. The black widow spider is the most venomous spider in the United States. The black widow's venom is much more toxic than that of the rattlesnake. The black widow, however, is not usually deadly to adults because it only inserts a small amount of venom.

The black widow gets its name from the fact that after the male and female spiders mate, the female will eat the male spider. The black widow is found mainly in warm areas of the world. This spider is a shiny black color with a red hourglass shape on its abdomen. The black widow hangs upside down in her web and seldom leaves. She feeds on other insects such as flies, cockroaches, and beetles. Once caught in the web, the black widow will make small holes in the insects and suck out all of the juices.

The bite of a black widow spider is not necessarily painful, and it may go unnoticed. But the resulting abdominal pains and pain in the soles of the feet will soon follow. Other signs of being bitten by a black widow are sore muscles, swollen eyelids, and extreme sweating. Those with heart conditions may have to spend time in a hospital. You can see that playing around with this spider is not wise.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. Which statement explains how the black widow eats its prey?
 - a. She feeds on other insects such as flies, cockroaches, and beetles.
 - b. The black widow spider is the most venomous spider in the United States.
 - c. The black widow will stalk its prey.
 - d. Once caught in the web, the black widow will make small holes in the insects and suck out all of the juices.
2. Which statement is true?
 - a. The black widow eats her babies.
 - b. The black widow must be careful once she has mated.
 - c. The black widow's poison is more venomous than the rattlesnake.
 - d. The black widow is an endangered spider.
3. In this passage, the word *toxic* means . . .
 - a. unchanged.
 - b. unharmed.
 - c. lethal.
 - d. unchallenged.



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THE DOVE

The white dove is a symbol of peace throughout the world. The dove is actually a pigeon. Doves live together in small colonies. Its main predator is the Peregrine falcon. The white dove ranges in size from 12 to 14 inches long. It has white feathers, pink feet and legs, a pink bill, and red eyes. The dove has good eyesight and can see in color.

The dove will build a small shallow nest made of twigs and sticks. The nests are usually found on ledges. They are found along the seaside cliffs or even in the city on buildings and skyscrapers. The dove lays its eggs in the nest and both parents incubate the eggs. Only one to two eggs, called a clutch, are laid at a time.

Like most pigeons, the dove eats mostly seeds but will eat just about anything. The pigeon has only 37 taste buds, while humans have over 9,000. This means that pigeons are not picky eaters. When the dove drinks water, it actually sucks it up, which is unlike any other bird. The pigeon can fly up to 50 mph. Most doves stay pretty close to home and never go farther than 12 miles from their home. However, the dove has very strong wings and can fly much farther if necessary. The dove has a life expectancy of five years in the wild.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. A likely reason people are fascinated with the dove is because it . . .
 - a. is a fearless bird.
 - b. can get as heavy as 150 pounds.
 - c. is called by a variety of names.
 - d. has all white feathers.
2. Another word for *predator* is . . .
 - a. hunter.
 - b. characteristic.
 - c. victim.
 - d. diet.
3. After reading the passage, which of the following statements could be inferred?
 - a. The dove is a peacemaker with other animals.
 - b. The dove is a messy eater.
 - c. The dove is a great flyer.
 - d. The dove prefers the city to the seaside.