

REPTILES

READING PASSAGE SHORTCUTS

Short, High-Interest
Reading Passages
and Questions

THE TORTOISE

Can you imagine going for a year without even a drop of water to drink? That's exactly what some desert tortoises are able to do. These unique creatures live on the land, unlike their close relatives, the turtles, which live much of their lives in water. Tortoises are perfectly adapted for surviving in the dry environments, where many of them live.

There are many varieties of tortoises that have been roaming the earth since they first emerged 200 million years ago. For example, giant tortoises such as the Galapagos tortoise can weigh 500 pounds or even more! These tortoises can live 100 years or longer. However, smaller desert tortoises weigh about 10 pounds and live about 50 years.

Tortoises have very slow metabolisms. This means they can go for long periods of time without eating or drinking. Very slow movers, many tortoises spend long periods of time napping or burrowing underground. Desert tortoises in particular spend about 95 percent of their time underground. They do this to avoid the sweltering desert temperatures. When they do move around, they **nibble** on plants, including cacti.

When scared, tortoises withdraw within their shells to protect their heads and limbs. The reptile's front legs are longer than the back legs so that they can move over obstacles. A tortoise's front claws are used for digging burrows or nests for laying eggs.

Tortoises are some of the oldest creatures on the planet, having existed since the time of the dinosaurs. We can help make sure that tortoises continue to enjoy their relaxed lives by protecting their habitats.

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

- How long can a desert tortoise survive without water?
a) 10 years b) 1 year c) 200 days
- What does the word **nibble** mean?
a) fall b) chew c) crawl
- Describe the habitat where tortoises often live.

- What does it mean that "tortoises have metabolisms"?

- Describe the roles of the front legs and back legs.
a) _____
b) _____
- How much of their time do desert tortoises spend underground?
a) 100% b) 50%
- How much do giant tortoises weigh?

- How much do smaller desert tortoises weigh?

- Dinosaurs existed long before tortoises.
True or False? _____

THE AMERICAN ALLIGATOR

Weighing up to 1,000 pounds, American Alligators are formidable predators with powerful jaws that hold their prey in a death grip. These terrifying creatures are perfectly adapted to life in rivers, lakes, and swamps. In the US, they inhabit mainly the states of Florida and Louisiana, where there are plenty of watery habitats for them to explore.

American Alligators are survivors. Scientists estimate that this species is over 150 million years old. This means they lived alongside dinosaurs. Somehow, they survived the mass extinction event that killed off the dinosaurs. More recently, the alligator was also a threatened species due to human hunting to use its skin. However, today, the alligator is **thriving** thanks to laws that protect the reptile and its habitat.

Because of their enormous size, alligators move best in the water. There, they can move their large, heavy bodies gracefully. The nostrils on the top side of their snout allow the predator to breathe while the rest of its body is underwater. Alligators hunt in the water. They snap up fish, snakes, frogs, mammals, and turtles, among other unfortunate animals that cross their paths. They generally swallow the whole, or in large chunks.

American Alligators are powerful animals that we should respect so that we can live in harmony. If we can all respect wild areas, reserves, and waterways, we can make sure the alligator continues to live for years to come.

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

- How much can an American Alligator weigh?
a) 1,000 pounds b) 2,000 pounds c) 150 pounds
- What does the word **thriving** mean?
a) failing b) eating c) living well
- Why are American Alligators called survivors?

- Why is the alligator thriving today?

- Name 2 states where you might find an American Alligator:
a) _____
b) _____
- What is the purpose of this passage?
a) to inform b) to entertain c) to persuade
- Give 3 facts that describe the eating habits of the American Alligator:

- Because _____, alligators have difficulty moving through _____.
True or False? _____

GRADES 3-5

Created by: Shelly Rees

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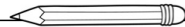
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- Describe the habitat where tortoises often live.

- What does it mean that "tortoises have very slow metabolisms"?

- Describe the roles of the front legs and front claws:
a) _____
b) _____
- How much of their time do desert tortoises spend underground?
a) 100% b) 50% c) 95%
- How much do smaller tortoises weigh?

- How much do smaller tortoises live?

- Dinosaurs existed long before tortoises.
True or False? _____



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5 Reptile Passages:

- American Alligator
- American Crocodile
- Tortoise
- Sea Turtle
- Iguana

Each informational passage is 1/2 page for a reading in a short time-frame.
The questions are both multiple choice and open ended.

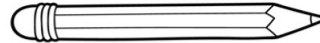
REPTILES

ANNOTATION GUIDE INCLUDED

Copy and cut
down the
center to
provide easy-
to-use
annotation
guides for
students to use!

ANNOTATING MARKS

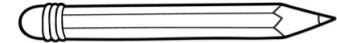
As you read through the passage,
make the following marks on your page.



- Number the paragraphs.
- Circle powerful words or phrases.
- Underline words or phrases you do not understand.
- Place a question mark near something that makes you think of a question.
- Write an exclamation mark near something that surprises you.
- Draw an arrow where you make a personal connection to certain ideas.

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