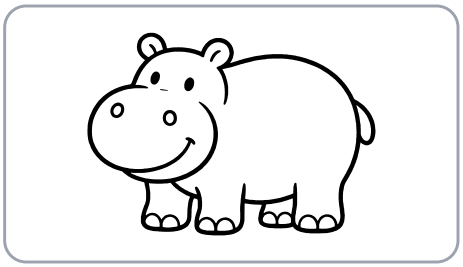
Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea and Summarizing

Read the text. The questions are on the next page.

Hippos



The name hippopotamus comes from Greek words that mean "river horse." Hippos live in the rivers and lakes of Africa. A grown hippo is one of the heaviest animals on land, yet it spends most of the day in the water.

Life in the Water

Water protects a hippo from the hot sun. A hippo's skin loses water quickly and can crack in dry air, so the hippo stays cool and wet in the water during the day. Its eyes, ears and nostrils sit high on its head. It can see, hear and breathe while the rest of its body stays hidden underwater. When it sinks below the surface, its ears and nostrils close tight.

Surprisingly, hippos are not good swimmers. They are too heavy to float easily. Instead, they walk or bounce along the bottom of the river, and they come up to breathe every few minutes.

Built-In Sunscreen

A hippo even makes its own sunscreen. Its skin oozes an oily liquid that starts out clear and soon turns reddish. Long ago, people thought hippos were sweating blood! Scientists think the liquid helps protect the skin from the sun, and it may help keep germs out of cuts, too.

Dinner on Land

When the sun goes down, hippos leave the water and walk onto land to eat. A hippo may follow the same path from the river night after night and graze on grass for four or five hours. By morning, it heads back to the water, where it will spend another day keeping cool.

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Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea and Summarizing

Answer the questions about hippos. Look back at the text.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

Hippos are not good swimmers.

People once thought hippos sweated blood.

Water keeps hippos cool by day, and they eat on land at night.

2. Give two key details from the text that support the main idea.

3. The text does not say why hippos eat at night. What can you tell from clues in the text?

4. Why did people long ago think hippos were sweating blood?

5. Write a summary of the text in two or three sentences.

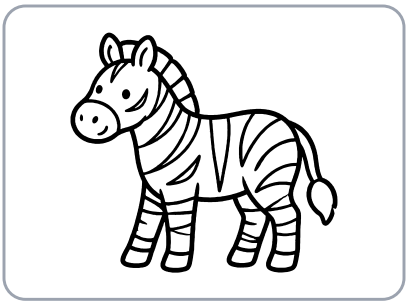
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Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea and Summarizing

Read the text. The questions are on the next page.

Why Do Zebras Have Stripes?



Every zebra has black and white stripes, and no two zebras have exactly the same pattern. Zebras live on the grasslands of Africa, where they graze together in herds. For more than a hundred years, scientists have wondered why zebras have stripes.

Many Ideas

Some scientists thought the stripes helped zebras hide. In a running herd, the stripes might make it hard for a lion to pick out one zebra. Others thought the stripes helped zebras stay cool under the hot sun. Still others thought each zebra's pattern helped the others in its herd know it.

Testing an Idea

In recent years, many scientists have found strong evidence for a different idea: stripes keep biting flies away. In one study, scientists watched horseflies around zebras and horses on a farm in England. The flies flew toward the zebras, but they often failed to land. They landed on the horses more often. Then the scientists put coats on some of the horses. Some coats were all black, some were all white, and some had stripes. Far fewer flies landed on the striped coats.

Why It Matters

Biting flies can spread disease, so a coat that keeps them away may help a zebra stay healthy. Scientists are still studying stripes, and there may be more than one reason for them.

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Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea and Summarizing

Answer the questions about zebra stripes. Look back at the text.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

Horses wear coats on farms.

Of all the ideas about stripes, keeping flies away has strong evidence.

Zebras live in herds in Africa.

2. What did the scientists do to test the idea that stripes keep flies away?

3. Fewer flies landed on the striped coats than on the plain ones. What does this suggest about stripes?

4. The author says scientists are "still studying stripes." What does this tell you?

5. Write a summary of the text in two or three sentences.

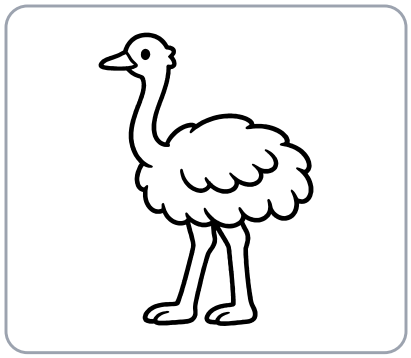
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Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea and Summarizing

Read the text. The questions are on the next page.

The Ostrich



The ostrich is the largest bird alive today. It can stand about 9 feet (2.7 meters) tall and weigh more than 200 pounds (90 kilograms). Ostriches live on the dry, open lands of Africa. Yet this giant bird cannot fly, because its wings are far too small to lift its heavy body.

Built to Run

An ostrich does not need to fly to escape danger, because it can run. Its long, strong legs can carry it at about 43 miles an hour (70 kilometers an hour), faster than any other bird can run. Each foot has just two toes, and the bigger toe has a thick nail that helps it push off the ground. The wings still help, too. An ostrich spreads them for balance and to turn quickly as it runs.

Giant Eggs

Ostriches lay the largest eggs of any living bird. One egg can weigh about 3 pounds (1.4 kilograms), as much as about two dozen chicken eggs. Several females may lay their eggs in one nest, a shallow hole scraped in the sand. The male and the main female take turns sitting on the eggs.

A Famous Myth

You may have heard that an ostrich hides by burying its head in the sand, but that is a myth. An ostrich may lie down with its long neck flat along the ground, and from far away, its head seems to disappear. An ostrich also lowers its head into its nest to turn its eggs, which may have helped the myth begin.

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Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea and Summarizing

Answer the questions about the ostrich. Look back at the text.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

Ostriches bury their heads in the sand.

Ostrich eggs weigh about 3 pounds.

The ostrich is a giant bird that cannot fly but is built to run.

2. Give two details that show an ostrich is built to run.

_____

_____

_____

3. How does an ostrich use its wings if it cannot fly?

_____

_____

4. Why might people have believed the myth about ostriches? Use two clues from the text.

_____

_____

_____

5. Write a summary of the text in two or three sentences.

_____

_____

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Name _____ Date _____

Main Idea and Summarizing

Read a nonfiction text. Write its main idea and key details. Then sum it up.

Title

Main idea

Key detail

Key detail

Key detail

Something the text shows without saying it

My summary the main idea and key details in a few sentences, in my own words

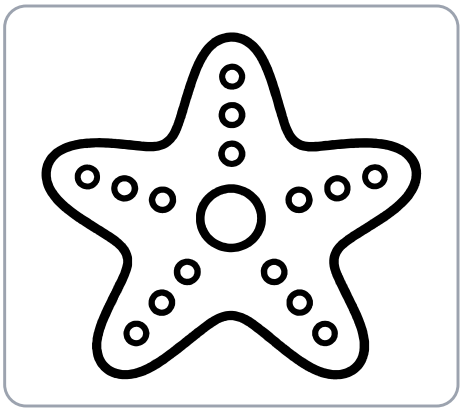
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Name _____ Date _____

Listen and Answer

For the grown-up: read this text aloud. The questions are on the next page.

Sea Stars



Sea stars are often called starfish, but they are not fish at all. A fish has a backbone, gills and fins, and a sea star has none of these. It is related to sea urchins and sand dollars.

Most sea stars have five arms, but some kinds have ten, twenty or even forty. Under each arm are hundreds of tiny tube feet. A sea star uses them to creep slowly over rocks and to grip its food.

A sea star has a surprising way to eat. When it finds a clam or a mussel, it wraps its arms around the shell and pulls until the shell opens a tiny crack. Then it pushes its own stomach out of its body, slips it inside the shell, and digests the animal right there.

If a sea star loses an arm, it can grow a new one. The new arm may take many months, or even a year, to grow back.

For the grown-up

Read this text aloud.
The questions are on the next page.

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Name _____ Date _____

Listen and Answer

Listen to the text about sea stars. Then answer the questions.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

Clams have hard shells.

A sea star is not a fish, and it moves, eats and heals in surprising ways.

Sea stars live with sea urchins.

2. Why is a sea star not a fish?

_____

_____

3. Tell how a sea star eats a clam, in order.

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Sum up the text in two or three sentences.

_____

_____

_____

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Main Idea and Summarizing

Answer the questions about hippos. Look back at the text.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

Hippos are not good swimmers.

People once thought hippos sweated blood.

Water keeps hippos cool by day, and they eat on land at night.

2. Give two key details from the text that support the main idea.

The water keeps a hippo's skin from drying out in the sun. It can breathe with only its nostrils above the water.

3. The text does not say why hippos eat at night. What can you tell from clues in the text?

The sun goes down at night, so it cannot dry out a hippo's skin while the hippo is out of the water.

4. Why did people long ago think hippos were sweating blood?

Their skin oozes a liquid that turns reddish.

5. Write a summary of the text in two or three sentences.

Hippos spend their days in the water, which keeps their skin from drying out. They walk on the river bottom, make a red sunscreen, and graze on land at night.

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Main Idea and Summarizing

Answer the questions about zebra stripes. Look back at the text.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

Horses wear coats on farms.

Of all the ideas about stripes, keeping flies away has strong evidence.

Zebras live in herds in Africa.

2. What did the scientists do to test the idea that stripes keep flies away?

They watched horseflies around zebras and horses, then put black, white and striped coats on horses and counted the flies that landed.

3. Fewer flies landed on the striped coats than on the plain ones. What does this suggest about stripes?

It suggests the stripes themselves keep flies from landing, not something else about zebras.

4. The author says scientists are "still studying stripes." What does this tell you?

No one is completely sure yet why zebras have stripes.

5. Write a summary of the text in two or three sentences.

Scientists have had many ideas about why zebras have stripes. Studies show that stripes keep biting flies away, but scientists are still learning.

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Main Idea and Summarizing

Answer the questions about the ostrich. Look back at the text.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

Ostriches bury their heads in the sand.

Ostrich eggs weigh about 3 pounds.

The ostrich is a giant bird that cannot fly but is built to run.

2. Give two details that show an ostrich is built to run.

Its long, strong legs carry it at about 43 miles an hour, and a thick nail helps it push off the ground.

3. How does an ostrich use its wings if it cannot fly?

It spreads them for balance and to turn quickly as it runs.

4. Why might people have believed the myth about ostriches? Use two clues from the text.

From far away, an ostrich lying with its neck flat looks as if its head is gone, and it puts its head down into its nest.

5. Write a summary of the text in two or three sentences.

The ostrich is the biggest bird, but it cannot fly. It runs very fast, lays the largest eggs, and does not really bury its head.

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Listen and Answer

Listen to the text about sea stars. Then answer the questions.

1. What is the main idea of the text?

Clams have hard shells.

A sea star is not a fish, and it moves, eats and heals in surprising ways.

Sea stars live with sea urchins.

2. Why is a sea star not a fish?

It has no backbone, gills or fins, as a fish has.

3. Tell how a sea star eats a clam, in order.

It wraps its arms around the shell and pulls it open a crack. Then it pushes its stomach inside and digests the clam.

4. Sum up the text in two or three sentences.

Sea stars are not fish. They creep on tube feet, eat clams by pushing their stomachs into the shell, and can regrow an arm.

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