

Clarifying

Level 2

A Collection of Readings

**Reading
Wings** 4th
Edition

The **Savvy
Reader**

This project was developed at the Success for All Foundation under the direction of Robert E. Slavin and Nancy A. Madden to utilize the power of cooperative learning, frequent assessment and feedback, and schoolwide collaboration proven in decades of research to increase student learning.

The Savvy Reader—Clarifying, A Collection of Readings

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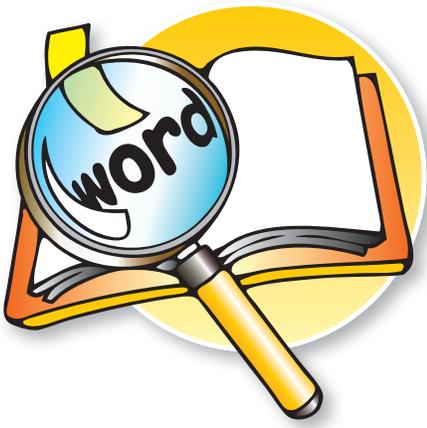


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Cowboys

Picture a cowboy. He has a big hat on. He wears a plaid shirt and jeans. He has leather pieces on his legs. He has on boots with spurs. And, he carries a lasso. He sits on a horse. But do you know that all this clothing and equipment have special purposes?

When cowboys herd, they are out in the sun much of the day. They wear wide-brimmed hats to keep the sun off their faces. They wear long-sleeves and pants to keep burrs from harsh plants off their skin. The leather pieces on their legs are called chaps. These protect cowboys from brush and from the cattle that they herd. His boots protect his feet. Spurs help him guide his horse. He uses his lasso to gather cattle. This helps the cowboy bring a stray cow back to the group.

Rodeos

Cowboys today often participate in rodeos. Rodeos can be held in indoor or outdoor arenas. The arenas are usually dirt-covered circles of ground. Rodeos include many different events. There are some bull-riding events. There are some bull-roping events. Events can be judged or timed. Winners of the events usually win money as a prize. Both cowboys and cowgirls take part in rodeos.

An important part of rodeos are rodeo clowns. Rodeo clowns protect cowboys and cowgirls when they are bucked off a bull. The rodeo clowns distract the bulls so the animals move away from the riders. Being a rodeo clown is a dangerous job. Many people think rodeos are also dangerous to the animals. Many groups protest rodeos and stand up for the animals' rights.

Maggie and

Millie



Story by Sam R. McColl
Illustration by James Bravo



Maggie lived on Oak Street. Her family had a nice, pink house. There was a tire swing in the front yard. Maggie loved that tire swing. Maggie had fun on that swing. She would swing all day. One day the swing broke. Maggie didn't know what to do.

The next day after Maggie's mother came home from work, she said, "I have a surprise for you. Come out to the driveway." Maggie and her mother went out to the driveway.

Maggie saw the surprise. Tied to a tree was a big, striped tiger. The tiger wagged her tail. The tiger stood up. She purred happily when she saw Maggie.

"Where did this tiger come from, Mom?" Maggie asked.



“I picked her up at the shelter,” Maggie’s mother replied. “I think she needed a home. I think she needed a friend.”

Maggie patted the tiger’s big head. “We can give her a home. I can be her friend, can’t I, Mom?”

“I think you can, Maggie,” her mother answered.
“But you should give her a name. Give her a nice name. She’s your tiger now.”

Maggie thought hard. She thought that she might call the tiger Lucy. “Do you like the name Lucy?” she asked the tiger. The tiger stopped purring.

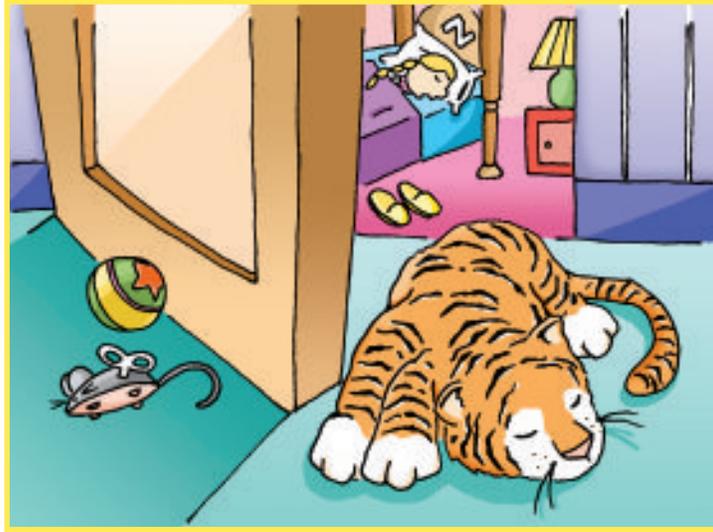
Maggie thought some more. “How about Juliana?” she asked the tiger. The tiger still wouldn’t purr.

Maggie thought some more. She thought as hard as she could. “I know!” she exclaimed. Her face lit up. “How about Millie? Shall I call you Millie?” she asked the tiger.

The tiger wagged her tail. She growled happily. “Millie it is!” shouted Maggie. Maggie gave Millie a great big hug.

Maggie had never had a tiger before. She had never had any pet before. She was excited but also a little anxious. Would she be able to take care of Millie? Would she know how to keep Millie safe? Would she know how to teach Millie tricks? Maggie wondered about all of these things. “I think you’ll do just fine, Maggie,” her mother said. “I believe in you.”

First Maggie decided that she should choose a place for Millie to stay. The first night Maggie spread out some blankets in the laundry room. She called Millie over. “Here’s your bed, Millie,” Maggie explained. Millie just looked at Maggie, purring.



When Maggie went to bed that night, Millie followed Maggie upstairs and lay down near the door to Maggie’s bedroom. “Well, I suppose she can stay near my room,” Maggie thought. “It will be like a sleepover every night!” She asked Millie, “Do you want to sleep here by my room?” Millie purred happily, her tail wagging back and forth. “It’s settled then,” Maggie said.

Maggie awoke in the middle of the night. She had had a scary dream. She reached out in the night. She crept to the door. “Are you there, Millie?” Maggie whispered and then felt Millie’s soft fur. Maggie heard Millie purr. PURR! PURR! PURR! This made Maggie feel better. “Good night, Millie!” she whispered. PURR! PURR! PURR! Maggie didn’t have any more scary dreams that night.

The next day was Sunday. Maggie awoke and she could smell pancakes cooking downstairs.

“Wake up, Millie,” she said. Millie opened her eyes.

PURR! PURR! PURR! went the tiger.

Maggie and Millie went downstairs. As her father prepared a plate of pancakes for Maggie, Maggie filled Millie’s bowl full of tiger food.

Maggie sat down to her pancakes. Before she knew it Millie was there. Millie’s big paws were on the table.

Millie stared at Maggie’s pancakes. She purred as her tail moved back and forth.

“Get down, Millie,” Maggie scolded. “Tigers don’t belong on the table.” Millie didn’t move. Maggie raised her voice. “Get down, Millie!” she exclaimed.

Millie seemed surprised by the tone of Maggie's voice. She took her paws off the table and lay down on the floor. "I'm sorry I had to scold you, Millie," Maggie whispered.

Millie's tail started wagging again as Maggie petted her and gave her a piece of pancake. PURR! PURR! PURR! went the tiger.

"You're doing a good job with Millie," Maggie's father said. "Having a tiger is a big responsibility. You have to be stern but also kind. Just like you were. Also you rewarded Millie for taking her paws off the table. That's how animals learn."

"Thanks, Dad," Maggie said. "I want to do well having Millie."

"I'm sure you will," her dad assured her. "What are you and Millie going to do today?"

"I thought I'd show Millie the neighborhood. That way she'll know the area where we live. She won't ever get lost if I do that," Maggie said.

"Good idea," her dad replied.



When breakfast was finished, Maggie and Millie got ready to go for a walk. Maggie’s mother had bought a leather leash for Maggie to use with Millie. It was a beautiful day.

As soon as Maggie and Millie stepped outside, Millie became excited. She was eager to run and play. She jumped up and down. She purred. She pulled at the leash. Then, all of a sudden, Millie started running down the street. Maggie wasn’t ready, so she dropped the leash. Off Millie went! Maggie chased her.

“Millie! Stop!” Maggie yelled. But Millie wouldn’t stop. She wanted to run.

Maggie couldn't run as fast as Millie. Millie began to disappear around a far corner. Maggie was afraid. She was afraid that Millie might run into traffic. She was afraid Millie might get lost. Maggie ran as fast as she could. Maggie ran around the corner where she thought Millie had turned. "Millie!" Maggie called. "Where are you?"

Just then, far up ahead, Maggie saw Millie looking up a tree. Maggie ran over to her. As she ran she kept calling, "Millie! Millie! Come here, girl!"

As Maggie neared the tree, she saw that Millie was growling at a squirrel. Maggie shouted a little more loudly, "Millie! Come here NOW!"

Millie turned. She saw Maggie and trotted over to her quickly. Maggie grabbed the leash. "I guess we still have some work to do, don't we girl?" Maggie said. She was happy Millie was okay. She hugged Millie. Millie licked her face. They walked home.

Time went by. Millie and Maggie became close friends. Maggie learned more and more about having a tiger. She learned when to scold Millie. She learned when to praise Millie. She learned how to control Millie when they went on walks.

Millie learned the rules. She didn't run when she wasn't supposed to. She kept her paws off the breakfast table. She didn't chase squirrels any more.

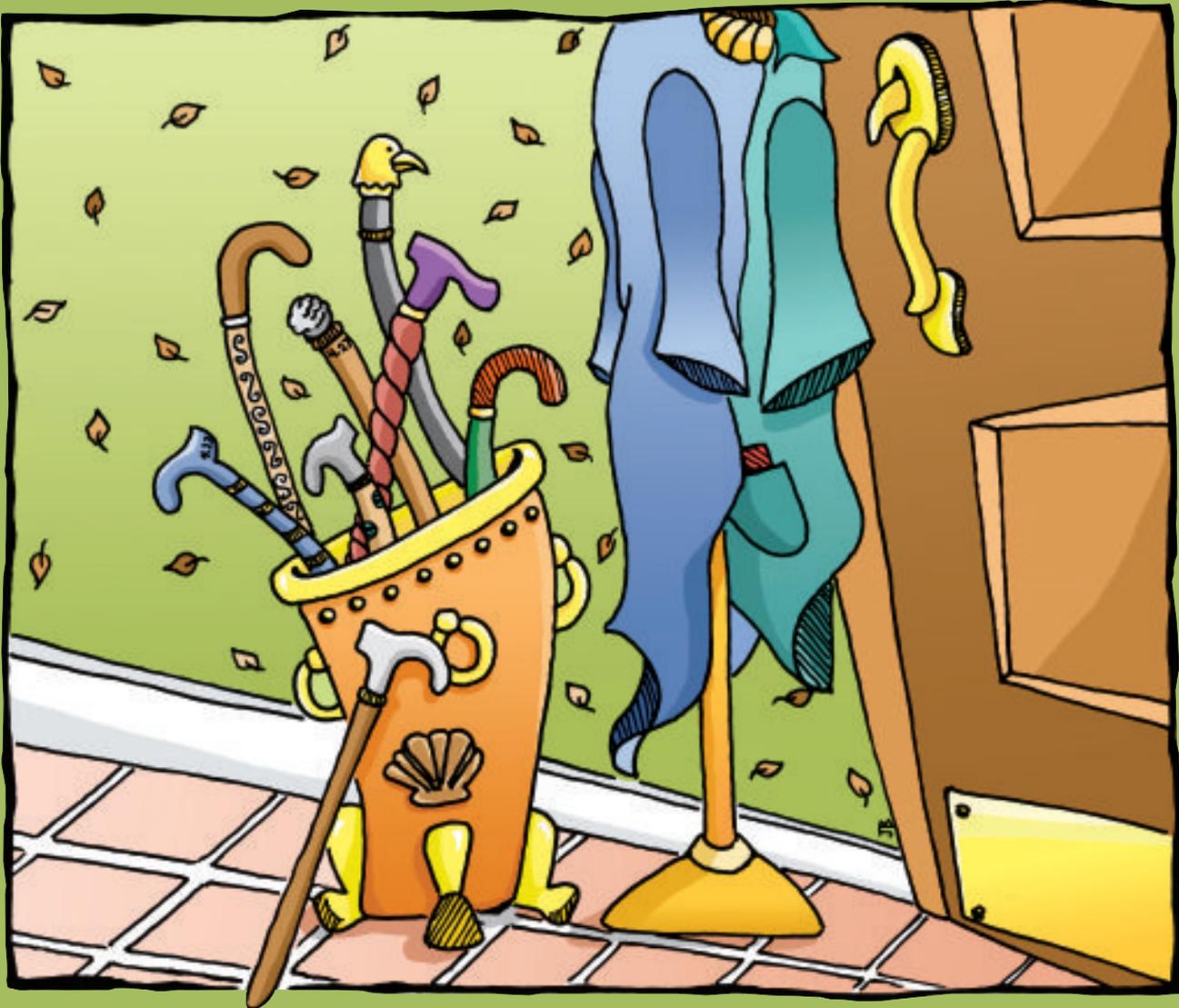
Every day when Maggie would come home from school, Millie would hear her. Millie would run downstairs and greet Maggie at the door. Maggie would hug Millie and say hello. Millie would wag her tail. She would purr happily.

Every night Millie would wait for bedtime.
Then she would follow Maggie upstairs. Millie
would sleep near the door of Maggie's bedroom.
When Maggie would wake up in the night, she
would call for Millie.

And she would hear Millie go
PURR! PURR! PURR!



Grandpa John's Canes



Story by Talia Khalid

Illustration by James Bravo



I don't get to see my grandfather very often. He's my dad's dad. That makes him my grandpa. I call him Grandpa John.

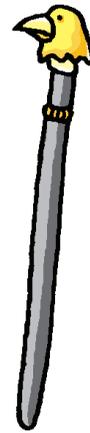
I also have a Grandpa Frank. He's my mom's dad. He lives with us. So I see him a lot.

But Grandpa John lives in another state. He lives in New York City. We can go see him only twice a year. We go in July. We also go in November.

The July trips are the best. We go see him for the Fourth of July. There are always lots of fireworks. They light up the sky. New York City is the best place to see fireworks. If you don't believe me, go see for yourself someday. Boom! Bang! Crash! Pow! I love fireworks. But they're not my favorite things about visiting Grandpa John.

My favorite things about Grandpa John are his canes. He has hundreds of them. Big canes. Small canes. Carved wooden canes. Shiny gold canes that twinkle. He likes to show them to us when we visit.

Every cane has a story. Grandpa John's favorite cane is a tall, black, wooden cane. It has a gold eagle's head at the top. Grandpa John loves that cane most. When he sees that cane, he tells his favorite story.



Long before my dad was even born, Grandpa John was strolling down the street. I think it was Park Avenue. He saw a crowd up ahead. He went to see what was happening.

The president of the United States was in town. The president then was Calvin Coolidge. Grandpa John went to meet him. President Coolidge said he liked Grandpa John's cane. Grandpa John said he liked President Coolidge's cane too. Do you know what? They traded! That's why the black cane with the eagle's head is his favorite.

I wish that everybody still carried canes. Only my Grandpa John does. My dad doesn't. But he likes the stories Grandpa John tells. Dad has a favorite cane story too. But it's not the same story.

On the day I was born, Dad was at the hospital waiting for me to arrive. He was pacing up and down the hall. He was nervous. He didn't know what to expect. Dad had never been a dad before.

Dad says he heard a click click click coming around the corner. He knew that sound. It was the sound Grandpa John made with his cane when he walked. Of course, Grandpa John wasn't a grandpa yet.

Dad was happy to see Grandpa John on that special day. And Grandpa John had a surprise. He had carved my birth date into his wooden cane. That made my dad happy. Dad still has that cane. It's his only cane, actually. It's brown with a silver knob.

I can see why that's Dad's favorite cane.



One Fourth of July my family was in New York. We were visiting Grandpa John, of course. I had just had a birthday. I had turned eight years old. I felt like a big kid.

Grandpa John gave me a big kid present too. He gave me one of his fanciest canes. It had my birth date carved into it!

I gave my Grandpa John a big hug, even though I was a big kid now. You're never too old to give somebody a hug.

Then Grandpa John had an idea.

"Let's take our canes and go watch the Fourth of July parade!" he said.

My dad and I thought it was a great idea. Mom said she'd stay in and prepare dinner. Now my dad always brings his cane when we go to visit Grandpa John. So all three of us had our canes, and out the door we went.

We stood in the crowd. We listened to the marching band. We watched the mayor of New York City go by. It was fun.

Then suddenly I tripped on the curb. I landed on my cane. It broke in half.

Grandpa John helped me up. Dad picked up the cane. He just couldn't fix it. I felt really bad. I had broken my birthday cane! I felt like crawling under a rock. But there were no rocks.

Dad told me not to worry. Grandpa John said that it would be okay. But I was very sad. I had ruined the Fourth of July. I started to cry even though I was a big kid. Grandpa John gave me his soft handkerchief. I wiped my tears with it. I blew my nose with it.

Grandpa John said, "There's no reason to cry, Tommie." But I didn't believe him.

The parade ended. We went back to have dinner with Mom. Mom saw that I was sad. Dad told her why. I started to cry some more.

Every Fourth of July we have dinner during the time between the parade and the fireworks. Most of the time I enjoy it. It's usually very fun. But not this time.

I was so upset about breaking my cane that I couldn't eat. I asked to be excused from the table. Mom let me go. I wanted to take a nap. Grandpa John has an extra room. I went there and lay down. I closed my eyes, but then I started to cry some more.

Later Grandpa John knocked on the door. I said, "Come in." He came in and sat down on the bed. He told me a story.

He said that something happened to him. It happened when he was my age. His dad, my great-grandpa, had given him a cane. It was a birthday cane. Grandpa John had broken it. Just like I had broken my cane. Grandpa John had felt sad then. His dad had told him not to worry. Then Grandpa John told me not to worry. I felt better.

Grandpa John finished his story. I felt better. So I followed him out to the dining room. I was starving. Luckily, mom had saved some beans-and-rice and some corn for me. That hit the spot. It almost made me forget about breaking the cane. Almost. But I did my best to enjoy dinner. I did my best to look forward to the fireworks later that night. I really did.

As I ate Grandpa John told a few stories. He told stories about some of his canes. He told about a cane he bought in Germany. He told about one that came from Ireland. I hoped that one day I could have another cane. I swore I wouldn't break that one. I told myself I would do better.

We all listened to Grandpa John's stories. In the middle of one there was a knock at the door.



Grandpa John walked to the door. I followed him. He opened it. "Mrs. Ferguson," he said, beaming. "How nice to see you! Please come in."

An older woman smiled right back at him. She was dressed in blue. She had a lovely blue bonnet on her head. It covered most of her feathery white hair. She had something hidden behind her back.

"Mr. Dorsey," she said, "I have something in my hands. I believe it may belong to you."

She produced a long, wooden cane. She held it up for all to see. It was my birthday cane!

"How did you fix that, ma'am?" I asked.

"Your grandpa asked me to. I'm good at fixing things."

"My birthday cane!" I cried, clapping my hands. "I thought I had broken it forever!"

Mrs. Ferguson smiled. "Special things can always be fixed. Your grandfather's canes are very special. So is yours," she said.

Grandpa John invited Mrs. Ferguson in for an iced tea. She gladly joined us. Mrs. Ferguson told stories. She told about special things she has fixed.

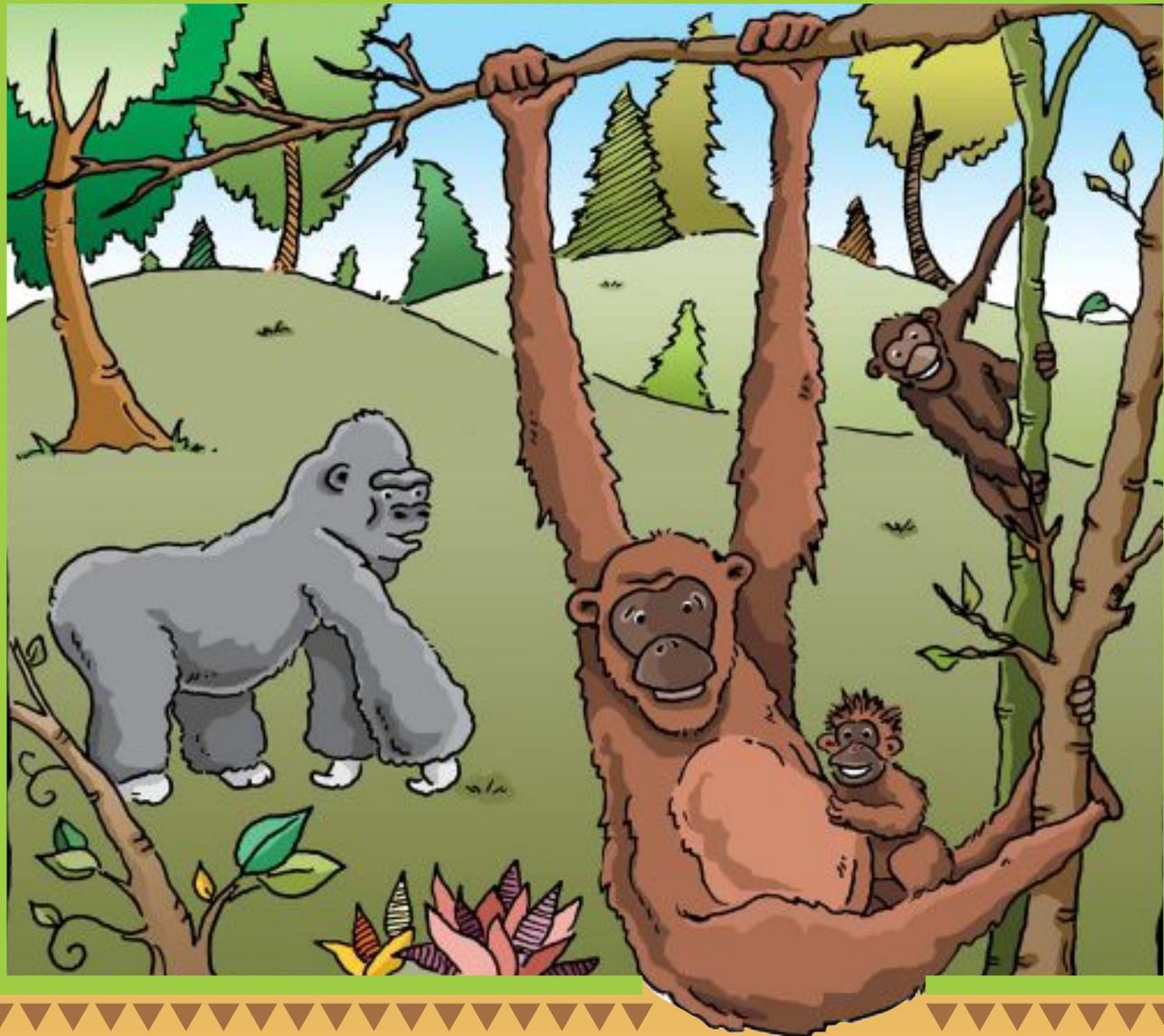
Later we all decided to go and watch the fireworks together. We took the steps up to Grandpa John's roof. The fireworks were wonderful. Boom! Bang! Crash! Pow! They lit up the night sky.

As I watched the fireworks, I held Grandpa John's hand. I knew that next year I would have my own special cane story to tell.

And I knew it would be a good story.

Apes

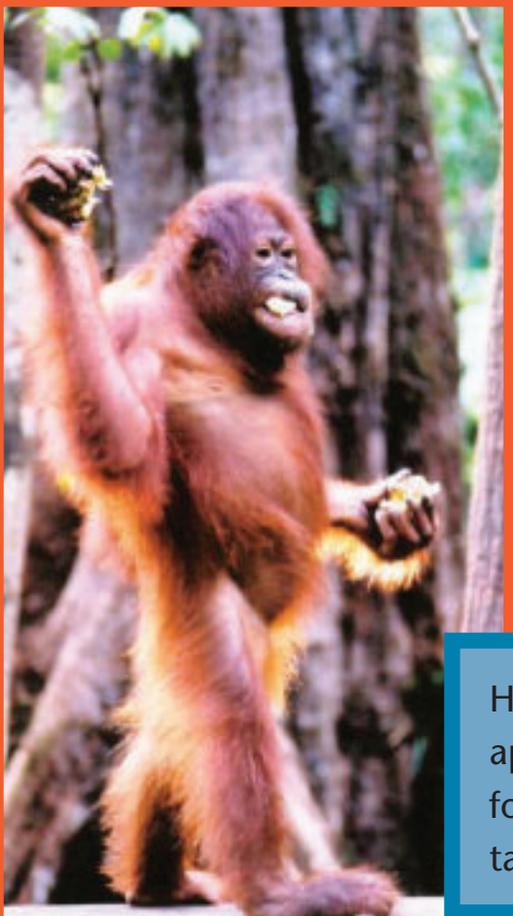
Are Great!



By Andy Wolinsky
Illustration by James Bravo

THERE ARE DIFFERENT APES

Apes are amazing creatures. There are many different kinds of apes. There are big apes and smaller apes. The big apes are called great apes.



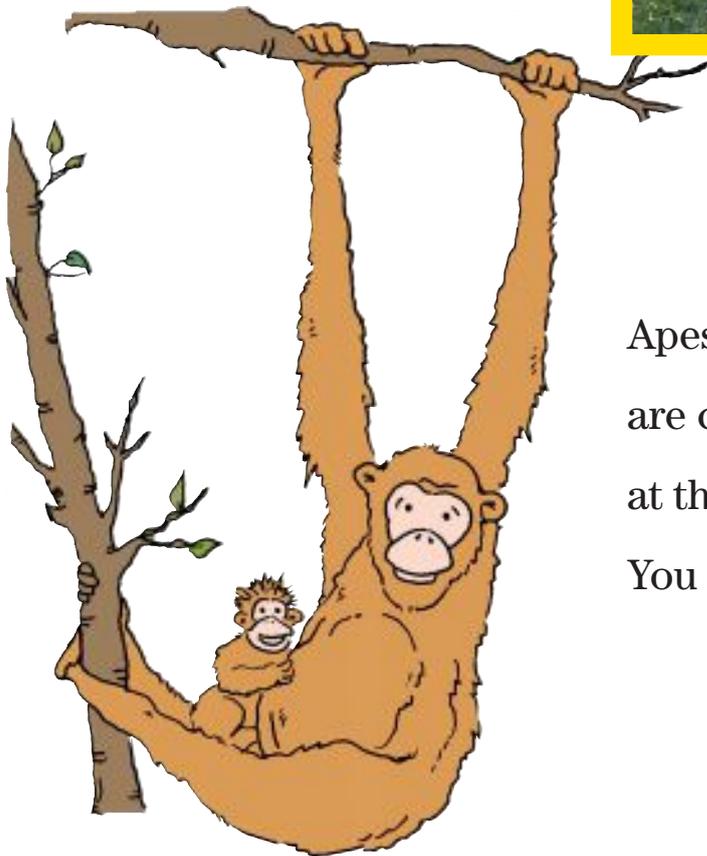
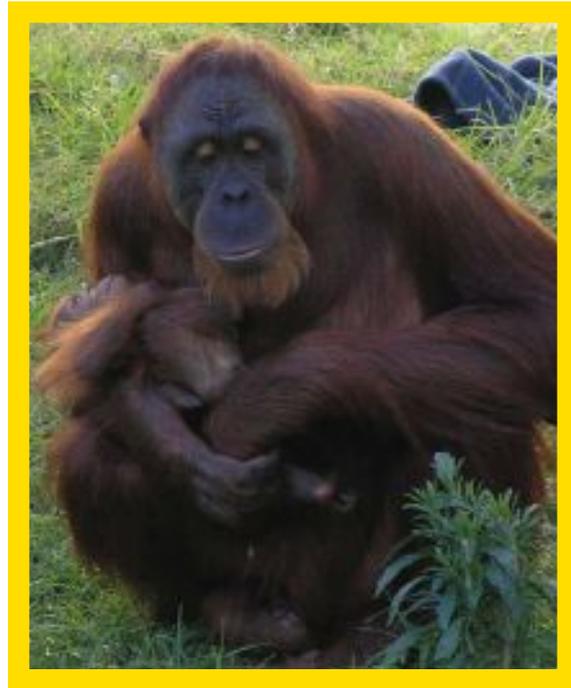
Gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees, and bonobos are all great apes. Most apes live in jungles and forests. Some live in trees. Some live on the ground.

How are monkeys and apes different? Just look for a tail! Monkeys have tails, but apes do not.

ARE APES MAMMALS?

Apes are mammals.

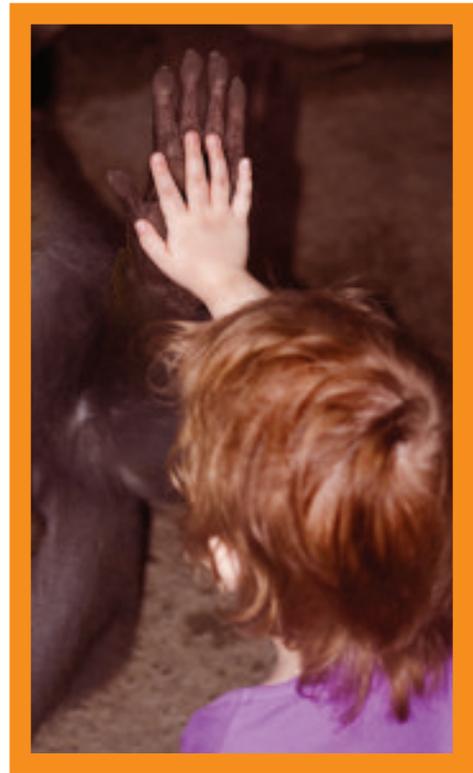
That means they are warm-blooded. They give birth to live young, rather than lay eggs. It also means they feed their young with milk.



Apes, like other mammals, are covered with hair. Look at the hair on your arms. You are a mammal too!

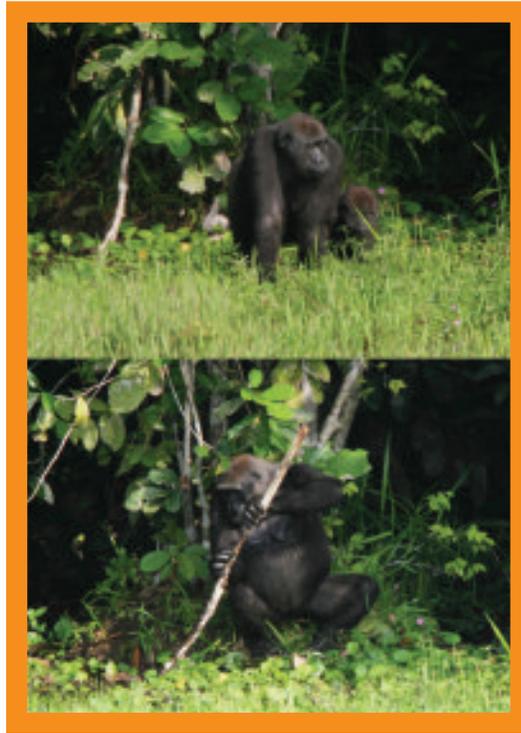
APES ARE LIKE US

There are other ways that apes and people are alike. How many fingers do you have on your hands? Apes have five fingers too! They use their fingers just like you do. Look at your thumb. It is called an opposable digit. Your thumbs help you pick up objects in your hands. Apes have opposable thumbs too! Apes even have opposable big toes. They pick up objects with their feet. Do you think you can pick up objects with your feet like an ape?



opposable: Able to be placed on the opposite side of something else.





APES STICK TOGETHER

Just like people, most apes prefer to live with other apes. Groups of apes are called bands, troops, or communities. They are usually led by one strong male, called the alpha. He is like the head of the family. There are many females, and there may be a few weaker males in the group as well.

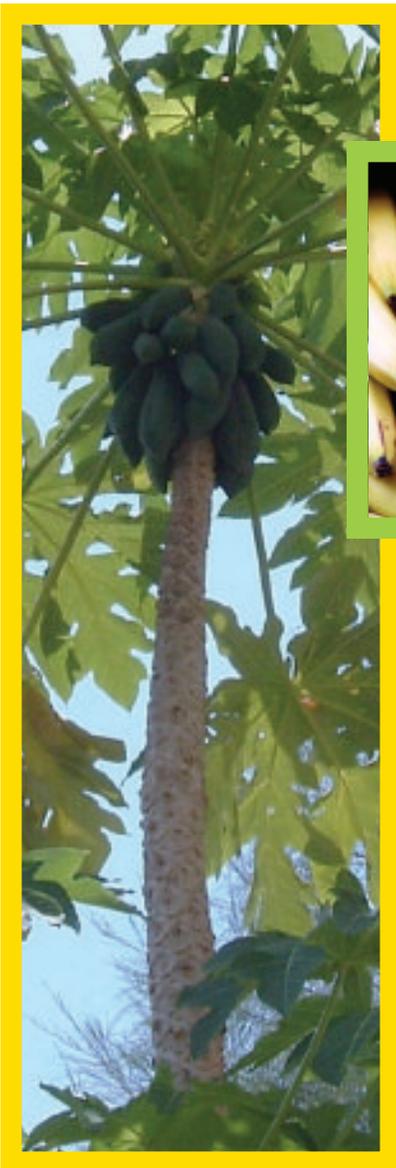
Different Apes:

Orangutans like living alone in the forests. Bonobos live in groups led by females.



APES WORK TOGETHER

Apes work together in their groups. All the females work together to care for baby apes. If a mother gets injured or dies, another female may adopt her baby and raise it for her.



Apes are *omnivores*. This means they eat fruits, plants, and meat. They mostly eat fruits and plants, but they will also eat insects such as termites. Apes eat a lot of food! They usually eat as they move around the forest. Sometimes they gather food and share it with other apes in their group.

Animals that eat fruits and plants are **herbivores**. Animals that eat meat are **carnivores**.

THE BIGGEST APES

Gorillas are the biggest apes in the world. They live in the jungles of Africa. Some gorillas are more than six feet tall! When threatened, a gorilla will make a terrible roar and bang its long arms on the ground. The biggest, oldest male gorillas in a troop are called silverback gorillas. There is usually only one silverback gorilla in each troop.



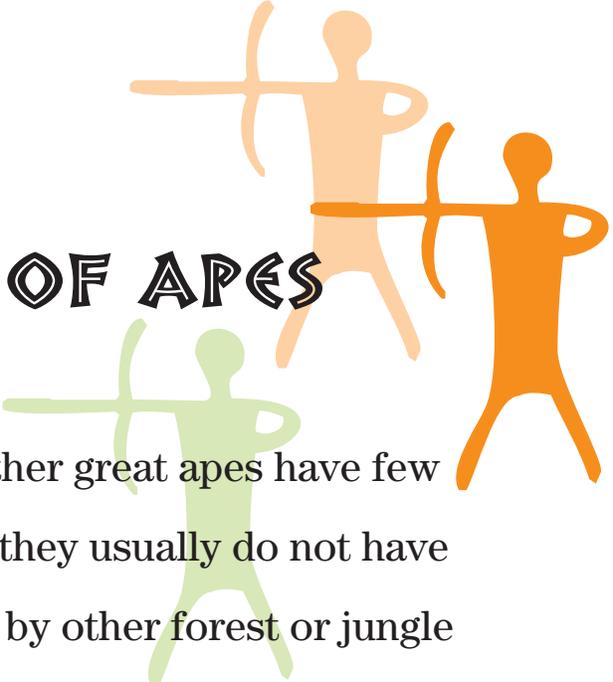
OTHER GREAT APES



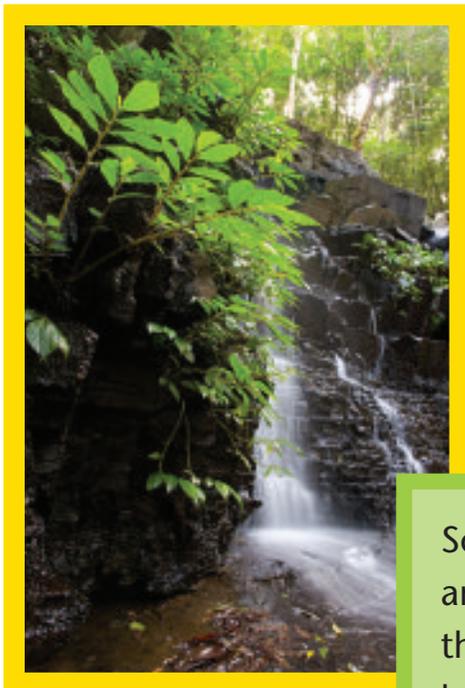
Chimpanzees and bonobos also live in Africa. They live in the rainforests. These apes are very clever and good at climbing trees. They are both smaller than gorillas, and bonobos are slightly smaller than chimpanzees. In fact, scientists thought bonobos were just small chimps at first! Orangutans are the only apes that live in Asia. They are not quite as big as gorillas, and they like to live in the trees. They have shaggy, reddish-orange fur and long arms that help them swing from tree to tree.



ENEMIES OF APES



Gorillas, orangutans, and other great apes have few natural enemies. That means they usually do not have to worry about being harmed by other forest or jungle animals. They do, however, have to worry about human beings. Human beings are the only threat to great apes. Hunters can harm apes.



Also, some of the forests and jungles where the apes live are being cut down. This makes it difficult for apes to find places to live.

Scientists think there may be only around 600 mountain gorillas left in the wild. Mountain gorillas are the largest of the three types of gorillas.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM APES?

Some people say that apes are humankind's closest relatives. This is because of the way they look, the way they live, and the way they act. We can learn a lot about ourselves and the world by studying apes. Apes are fascinating creatures that should be protected and appreciated. You don't have to go to Africa or Asia to find apes, however. You may be able to see apes up close and personal at your local zoo.



All About Reptiles

By Darnell Parker
Illustration by James Bravo



Introduction:

What is a Reptile?

What is a reptile? A reptile is a kind of animal.

Reptiles are cold-blooded. That means they can't warm themselves. We are warm-blooded. We can warm ourselves. We are mammals. Reptiles also lay eggs.

Most do not give birth to live babies. Mammals do.

Reptiles usually have rough, scaly, or thick skin. Snakes

are reptiles. Lizards are reptiles.

Crocodiles and alligators are reptiles.

Dinosaurs were reptiles. But there are no more dinosaurs.

We will learn about

some reptiles. First, we

will learn about snakes. Then, we

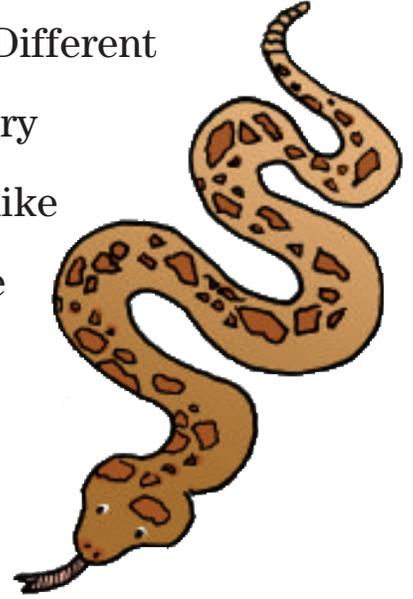
will learn about lizards and other

larger reptiles.



PART 1: SNAKES

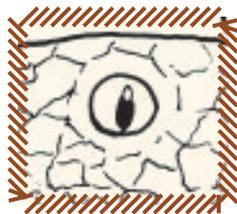
You can find snakes all over the world. Different snakes live in different places. Some live in dry places. Some like wet places. But all snakes like the sun. The sun keeps them warm. They like to lie on their bellies. At night they find cozy places to sleep.



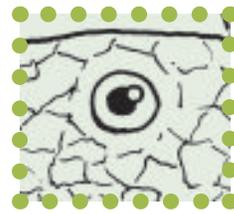
There are two types of snakes. Some snakes have poison inside them. This poison is called venom. Venom can be harmful. Other snakes do not have venom. Most of these snakes cannot hurt you. If you come across a snake, find an adult, like a teacher or a parent, just to be certain the snake is harmless.

Safety Tip!

Venomous snakes have **slanted** pupils.



Snakes **without venom** have **round** pupils!



Venomous Snakes in the United States

The Water Moccasin

There are a few venomous snakes in the United States. One of the most common is the water moccasin. The water moccasin lives in the eastern United States. It is also called the cottonmouth.

Water moccasins are water snakes. They like to swim in rivers. In fact, they must live near rivers. If they cannot get in the water, they will die. They can swim very well.

Water moccasins are very dark snakes. They are dark black and green. If you are in a river in the South or East, keep an eye out for water moccasins.



Can you identify why water moccasins are also called cottonmouths?

Interesting!

Water moccasins like the watery parts of the South and East. The western states are too dry for them!



The Rattlesnake

Another common venomous snake in the United States is the rattlesnake. Rattlesnakes live mainly in the West. They like the warmth of the desert. They like the warm sun. They sleep on hot rocks during the day. They like the cool nights.



Do you know why they're called rattlesnakes? They have rattles on their tails! The rattle is made from skin left behind when the snake sheds. When the snake is scared, it shakes its tail. This will make a rattling sound to scare away other animals. Hearing that rattle lets you know a snake is nearby.

Rattlesnakes do have venom, so they can hurt some people and animals.

Good to know!

Most rattlesnakes have diamond shapes on their backs! If you see a snake with diamond shapes, be alert and stay away!

Venomous Snakes Across the World

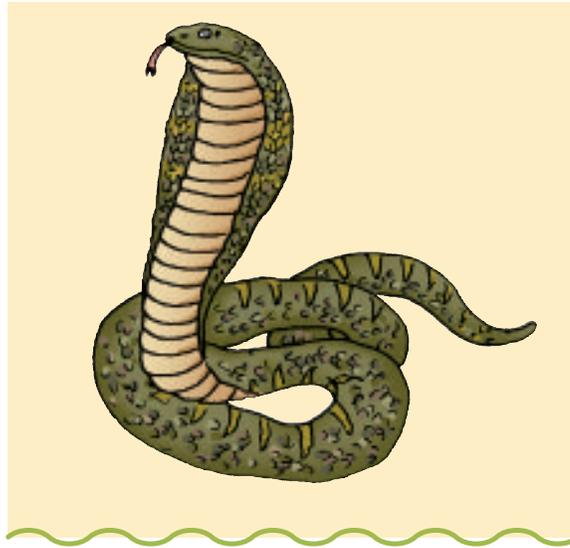
The Black Mamba

The black mamba (MOM-bah) is a very venomous snake. It is one of the deadliest snakes in the world. Luckily, there are no black mambas in the United States.

Here is something strange. The black mamba is not black! It is a mix of olive green and gray. Why is it called the black mamba? The inside of its mouth is black. It shows the inside of its mouth when it is scared.

The black mamba lives in Africa. People have long told stories about the dangers of the black mamba. The snake is described as a terrible monster in most stories. People in Africa do their best to stay away from it. This is a good idea. Although most scientists do not think the wild stories are true, they agree that the black mamba is a very dangerous snake.





The King Cobra

In Asia you will find the king cobra. King cobras are dangerous. They are about thirteen feet long. Some can grow to twenty feet. King cobras are not all the same color. Some are brown. Some are black. Some are even yellow. Some have white stripes.

King cobras have loose skin on their necks. This skin stretches out when the snake is angry or afraid. It is called a hood. King cobras are one of the few snakes that make nests for their eggs. A female cobra may lay twenty to fifty eggs in her nest. She will guard them fiercely.

Have you ever seen a snake charmer put a cobra in a trance with his flute? It is all just a trick! A king cobra cannot hear the flute playing. It is just following the movements of the snake charmer.

Interesting!

King cobras have great sight. They can see very far.

Other Dangerous Snakes: Constrictors

The Boa Constrictor

Some snakes are not venomous but are still dangerous. They are snakes that can squeeze other animals. These snakes are called constrictors



(kon-STRIK-ters). They squeeze the breath out of smaller animals. Boas are a kind of constrictor. They can grow to be more than twenty feet long. Boas live in South America. They live in the Amazon rainforest. Boas feed on the mice that live on the rainforest floor. Most boas have red tails and colored spots.

The anaconda is a larger cousin of the boa. It can grow to more than twenty-nine feet long and weigh more than 550 pounds! They travel slowly on land but are quick in the water. Anacondas feed on larger animals in the South American rainforests. They have been known to eat jaguars!

Boas give birth to live young! Instead of laying eggs, they keep the eggs inside their bodies until the babies hatch.

The Python

Pythons are related to boas but are a little different. Pythons are longer than boas, even longer than anacondas! But they are not as heavy as anacondas. Pythons live in Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, and Australia.

Unlike boas, pythons lay eggs. The female wraps her body around the eggs to keep them warm.

Some types of pythons are kept as pets in the United States. Pythons do not hunt humans, but that does not mean they are not dangerous! Pet pythons have been known to hurt their owners by doing what they do best: constricting. You should always be careful when handling large snakes.



Interesting!

Some python owners in the United States have been known to let their snakes free in the wild when they have grown too large. This is dangerous and harmful to wildlife.

Harmless Snakes

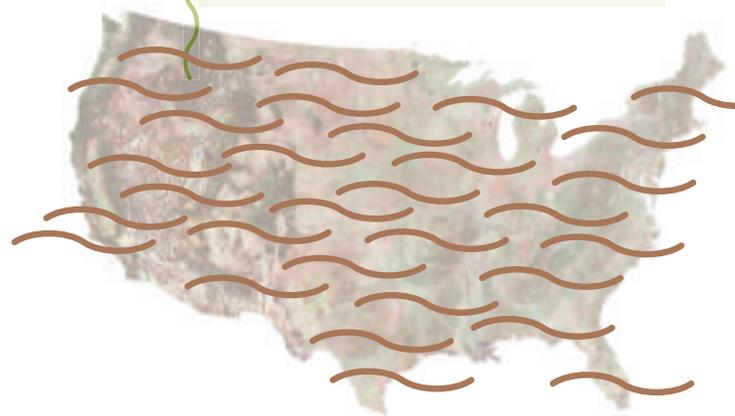
Not all snakes are dangerous. Most are harmless.

Many snakes help humans. One is the garter snake. There are more garter snakes than any other snake in the United States. Some garter snakes live in gardens. They eat pests that hurt plants.

Garter snakes are all over the world. They can live in wet areas. They can live in dry areas. They are tiny. So they can feed only on small animals. Have you ever seen a garter snake? If you ever see one, leave it alone. It's not causing any harm.

Did you know?

Garter snakes are in every state in the United States except Hawaii!



Learn More About Snakes

Many people fear snakes. They think snakes are scary and creepy. Some snakes are dangerous. But others are not. There is one way to stop being afraid of snakes. Learn about them. Find out what snakes live in your area. Are they harmless? Most snakes are. Read a text like this one. Watch a show about snakes. When you see a snake, tell a grown-up. Find out what kind of snake it is. Learning about things is a good way to stop fearing them.



Find out more!

To learn more about snakes, check out:
www.kidsplanet.org/factsheets/snakes.html.

PART 2: LIZARDS AND OTHER REPTILES

Snakes are reptiles. So are lizards. Like snakes, lizards are all over the world. Many lizards look similar to snakes. But lizards have legs, and snakes do not. Like snakes, lizards come in all different sizes and colors. Some lizards can hurt other creatures. Many lizards are harmless. They don't hurt anything. Many people are afraid of lizards. This is because of the way they look. Many lizards are scaly and creepy. Let's learn about some different lizards.



Small Lizards



The Gecko

Geckos are small lizards. They are about four inches long. They live all over the world. They live in damp areas. They live in dry areas. Some geckos live under houses. In some places people welcome geckos. Geckos eat pests. Some geckos have many colors. But most geckos are gray or brown.

Geckos have special toes. They can cling to surfaces. Geckos can climb walls. They can even hang from the ceiling. Some people think geckos make good pets. Others think they're hard to keep in cages.

How do they do that? You might think geckos have suction cups on their toes. Nope! Tiny hairs on their toes help them get a grip on walls and ceilings.

The Chameleon

Another small lizard is the chameleon (kuh-ME-lee-un). The chameleon might also be the most interesting. Chameleons can do something other lizards cannot do. Chameleons can change their colors!

People used to think chameleons changed colors to blend in with their surroundings. Now people know chameleons change color depending on whether they are frightened, angry, or calm. They also change color as the air gets warmer or colder. They also change when it gets dark and when it gets light again. They don't control this. It just happens.



Chameleons live mostly alone. They do not like other chameleons. They hunt insects at night and in the early morning. Chameleons have an interesting way of catching their dinner. They have very long and elastic tongues! Chameleons shoot their tongues out at high speed to snap up insects. Their tongues can be about twice as long as their bodies.

Did you know?

Chameleons' eyes can move in separate directions.



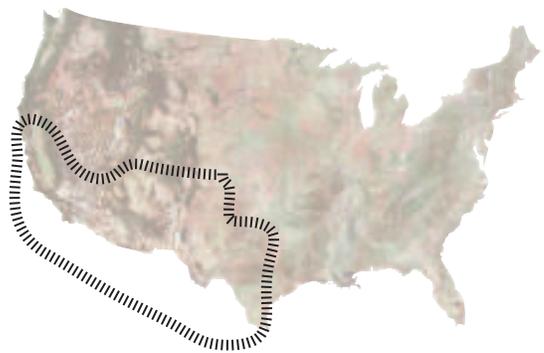
The Gila Monster

The Gila (HEE-la) monster is not a monster. It is simply a lizard. Gila monsters live in the southwestern United States. Do you live in the Southwest? You may have seen a Gila monster.

Gila monsters live in the desert. They have black, orange, pink, or yellow bands and spots. That makes them hard to see. They can hide from other animals. They can grow to be two feet long.

Gila monsters are like some snakes. They have venom. There are few venomous lizards in the world. The Gila monster is one.

But Gila monsters will not hurt people. In fact, they fear people. They scurry away and hide when they see people. There's no reason to fear Gila monsters. They are actually afraid of you!



Poison!

The Mexican beaded lizard is another venomous lizard in the world.

Larger Lizards

The Iguana

Let's learn about larger lizards. The iguana is a large lizard. It lives in South America. Iguanas are bright green. Some have black stripes. They can be more than four feet long. That is if you count the tail. The tail is longer than the body. Iguanas have scales around their faces. They have spikes that go down their backs.

Iguanas like to live near water. When they are frightened, they dive into the water. Iguanas are popular pets. In 1995 there were almost 1,000,000 iguanas in the United States. They can live to be almost thirty years old when they are well taken care of. However, you should make sure you are ready to take care of an iguana before getting one as a pet. They are not easy to keep as pets. Iguanas need a good diet, enough space, a clean home, and a lot of sunlight to be happy and healthy.



Safe Escape

Iguanas and many other lizards can lose their tails if caught by predators! Their tails break away without causing any pain and grow back over time.



The Komodo Dragon

The strongest of all the larger lizards is the Komodo dragon. They are not really dragons. They are just big lizards. They are the heaviest lizards in the world and one of the two largest reptiles in the world. These lizards can grow to be more than ten feet long. They feed on large animals such as pigs and cows. They can even eat people.

Komodo dragons can run really fast. They have strong jaws. They have a forceful bite. Their bite is deadly. Komodo dragons have more than fifty kinds of bacteria in their mouths. Their bites cause bad infections!

You do not want to find yourself face to face with one of these lizards. Luckily, Komodo dragons live far away in Indonesia.

Did you know?

The Komodo dragon is a member of the monitor lizard family. Another monitor lizard, the crocodile monitor, is the largest lizard in the world.

Other Large Reptiles

The Crocodile

The crocodile is one of the two largest reptiles in the world. Crocodiles live in water. They can grow to be about ten feet long, like Komodo dragons. They are dark green, with scaly skin. They have long jaws. Also like Komodo dragons, crocodiles are very, very dangerous. They are powerful, with strong jaws. They can sprint quickly on land.

Crocodiles prefer water. Crocodiles lurk under the surface of the water. They prey on creatures that come near the water to drink. When they attack, they pull



their prey underwater. They hold the prey underwater until the prey drowns. That's how the crocodile eats.

Did you know?

Crocodiles are like living dinosaurs! Modern crocs and fossils of their ancient ancestors from the time of the dinosaurs look nearly identical.



The Alligator

Alligators look like crocodiles. Their noses are a bit shorter. But their jaws are just as strong! They are dark green. They have thick skin and long tails.

Alligators like fresh water, not salt water. They like swamps. They like marshes. They like lakes and rivers. Most alligators live in the southeastern United States.

Alligators can run in short, fast bursts. That's how they catch their prey. They leap from the water. They run up the bank and grab hold of the prey. Few animals can outrun an alligator.

What's the difference?

How do you tell alligators and crocodiles apart? Look at their snouts! Alligators have shorter, U-shaped snouts that cover their bottom teeth. Crocodiles have longer and narrower snouts that do not hide their bottom teeth. Crocodiles seem to have a snaggletooth smile!

Closing:

REPTILES

We've learned about all kinds of reptiles. We've learned about harmful reptiles. We've learned about lizards that can't hurt people. Some reptiles are huge, like the Komodo dragon. Others, like the gecko, are tiny. Some live in the United States. Others live far away. Some hide from people. Others attack people. Some even help people, like geckos and garter snakes. Which reptiles are now your favorites?

Many people still think reptiles are creepy. That's why it's important to read about them. The more you read, the more you know. The more you know, the less frightened you'll be. What else can you do to find out more about reptiles?



