

# Recycling & Conservation: Why Recycle?

by ReadWorks



Recycling is a process where something is reused rather than thrown away. Common items that are recycled include aluminum and steel cans, glass, and newspapers. Recycling can be time-consuming and dirty work. For example, recyclable objects have to be sorted from trash. Then the objects have to be cleaned. Afterwards, the objects are turned into materials that can be used by people and companies. Why should people bother to recycle even though it takes a lot of work?

Recycling helps protect the earth. Recycling means less garbage in landfills. These are places where garbage is taken and buried. Recycling also helps conserve the earth's resources. For example, factories use less energy by recycling steel cans than by making new ones. Recycling paper saves trees from being cut down. Trees are used to make paper.

Every time you are about to drop a plastic bottle in the garbage, stop and think. Is it worth harming the earth? Your actions now can help preserve the environment for generations to come. All you have to do is throw that bottle into a recycling bin.

Get in the habit. Be proud of recycling. Encourage others to recycle. You can make a difference!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**1. What is recycling?**

- A. a process where something is reused
- B. a process where something is thrown away
- C. a process where something is taken and buried
- D. a process where something harms the earth

**2. How does the author organize the information in this passage?**

- A. The author explains the problems with recycling and suggests different solutions.
- B. The author describes similarities and differences between recycling and throwing things away.
- C. The author lists information about recycling in order of importance, from most to least important.
- D. The author describes recycling and shares an argument about why it's important.

**3. Read these sentences.**

". . . recyclable objects have to be sorted from trash. Then the objects have to be cleaned."

These sentences can be used to support which conclusion below?

- A. ". . . the objects are turned into materials that can be used by people and companies."
- B. "Recycling can be time-consuming and dirty work."
- C. "Recycling helps protect the earth."
- D. "Be proud of recycling."

**4. What can be concluded from this passage?**

- A. The author works for a recycling plant.
- B. The author does not believe in recycling.
- C. The author believes that all you have to do to save the environment is throw a bottle in a bin.
- D. The author believes that everyday people can help the earth.

5. What is the main idea of this passage?

- A. Recycling helps protect the earth and conserve its resources.
- B. Many people avoid recycling because it is too difficult.
- C. People must make decisions what to recycle.
- D. Only certain things can be recycled.

6. At the end of paragraph one, the author asks, "Why should people bother to recycle even though it takes a lot of work?" Why does the author include this question?

- A. to transition the reader to the next paragraph, which answers the question
- B. to question the reader's knowledge about recycling
- C. to summarize the major points in paragraph one
- D. to allow the reader to demonstrate understanding

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Recycling takes work, \_\_\_\_\_ it is good for the environment.

- A. instead
- B. before
- C. so
- D. but

8. What does the author suggest you do when you are about to throw a plastic bottle in the garbage?

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**9.** What examples does the author provide to show that recycling helps conserve the earth's resources?

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**10.** Read these sentences from the text.

"Get in the habit. Be proud of recycling. Encourage others to recycle."

How can these actions make a difference? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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# Take Me Out to the Ball Game

## By ReadWorks

Corinne skipped through the parking lot. She couldn't hold back her excitement. Her family was going to the baseball stadium for the first time!

"Corinne, chill out," said her brother, Jake. Jake was only two years older than Corinne, but he thought that gave him the authority to boss her around. Corinne slowed to a walk and waited for her family to catch up.

"I can't help it," she said. "I've never been to a baseball game before."

Corinne had watched countless baseball games on television. Baseball was her favorite sport, and she had been a Chicago Cubs fan as long as she could remember. Corinne thought that the best moment of her life would be when the Cubs finally broke their curse and won the World Series. The team had been losing for decades, but she knew that sooner or later, they had to win.

But tonight her family wasn't going to see the Cubs. They were going to see the Cougars, a new minor league team that had come to their town. Jake wasn't excited about the game. He thought the minor leagues didn't count. "The minor league is for players who aren't good enough for the major league," Jake always said. But Corinne liked the idea that these players weren't famous yet. They were still training and learning, just like her. Maybe she'd see baseball's next big star. Maybe he'd even sign a baseball for her.

"Mom," Corinne said, "Can we wait outside the dugout after the game? I want to get some autographs."

"Sure, we can," said Corinne's mother. "But let's enjoy the game first."

They pulled out their tickets and walked into the stadium. The stadium security guard checked Corinne's mother's purse and waved them through. "Mmmm," Corinne breathed in deeply. The air smelled like a delicious mix of popcorn and soda. Corinne looked at the tickets and saw that they were sitting on the upper level, just past third base. They walked up the concrete stairs and found their seats as the first inning was beginning.

Corinne couldn't decide whether to watch the field itself or the enormous screen behind the outfield. Her eyes darted back and forth between the two. The Cougars were pitching first. She cheered at the top of her lungs for every strike and booed when anyone on the other team, the Cyclones, got a hit. Even Jake looked like he was having fun, cheering just as loudly as Corinne.

The game was close. The Cougars would score, and then the Cyclones would score. Back and forth, the two teams battled. The Cyclones had a better pitcher, but the Cougars were quicker. Corinne especially liked the shortstop. He was short, like her, and he was really agile. No matter where the ball was, he was there first. He seemed to have a magic ability to predict its path.

“Mom,” said Corinne, tugging on her mother’s sleeve. “What’s the shortstop’s name?”

Her mother looked through the program, searching. “Cory Alvarez,” she said. “Cory!” thought Corinne. “Just like me.”

By the end of the ninth inning, the teams were still tied, and the Cougars were up to bat. “This is it,” Corinne said to Jake. “If the Cougars can manage to score just one run, then we’ll win!”

“Don’t be such a baby,” said Jake. “It doesn’t really matter. It’s just the minor leagues.”

Corinne noticed, though, that Jake was leaning forward in his seat and watching the batter with interest. Jake could pretend to be cool as a cucumber, but inside he was just as excited as Corinne.

The batter turned, and Corinne saw that it was her favorite player, Cory Alvarez. “Come on Cory,” she thought, “You can do it!”

Cory walked up to the home plate and tapped the bat on the ground twice. Then he lifted the bat and waited. The pitcher wound up and then threw a ball so fast, Corinne didn’t even see it. She heard the crack when the bat hit the ball, though, and saw the ball flying through the air toward third base. The ball sailed past the base, then over the stands and straight toward Corinne’s family. Corinne climbed up on her seat and put her hands out. She felt a sting and tumbled backwards as the baseball slammed into her palms. She tumbled out of the chair, and her parents kneeled over her. “Corinne! Corinne! Are you okay?”

Corinne held up the baseball and smiled. “I’m much more than okay,” she said.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which team is Corinne hoping will win this baseball game?

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2. Where does this story take place?

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3. Corinne is completely enjoying herself at the baseball game. What evidence from the story supports this conclusion?

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4. Why is Corinne so very excited about this baseball game?

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5. What is the main idea of this story?

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6. Read the sentences and answer the question.

"Corinne noticed, though, that Jake was leaning forward in his seat and watching the batter with interest. Jake could pretend to be cool as a cucumber, but inside he was just as excited as Corinne."

What does the phrase "cool as a cucumber" mean in this text?

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7. What word or phrase best completes the sentence?

Corinne especially likes Cory Alvarez \_\_\_\_\_ he seems to have the ability to predict where the ball will go and get there first.

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8. What happens to the baseball that Cory Alvarez hits?

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9. At the end of the story, Corinne says, "I'm much more than okay." What does Corinne mean by this? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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10. Why might Corinne be feeling "much more than okay" at the end of the story? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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# The Legend of Ol' Greeny

## By ReadWorks

Kevin pulled the flannel blanket tighter around his body as the cool lake breeze drifted off the soft waves toward the shore. The burning warmth coming from the bonfire was becoming weaker, and Kevin finally felt the cold of the night. He gazed at the faces that huddled around the glowing embers—his grandfather off to his right, his father directly across from him, and his younger sister, Kali, to his left. The only sound they heard was the gentle crash of the waves on the rocky shore. Kevin could just make out the lights of the cottages that sat on the opposite side of the lake, a couple miles away. He wondered if they were also bonfires that were flickering to their dark ends.

Cayuga Lake, one of the biggest Finger Lakes in upstate New York, isn't very wide but stretches to almost 40 miles, or 64 kilometers, in length. Kevin always wanted to swim across, since he thought he could manage a couple of miles. But he could only dream of swimming its length. He figured he would get too tired early on, even though he was a very strong swimmer. But as he stared at the fire, he fantasized about completing the feat, climbing onto the opposite shore to the massive crowd that had gathered to cheer him on. He would be wrapped up in a blanket like the one he was wearing now, and his photograph would be taken and put on the front page of the newspaper the next day with the headline: "Local Boy Swims the Length of Lake, Now Champion."

"Kevin! Hello... Earth to Kevin!" Kevin snapped his head up. His grandfather had been calling his name, but he had been too busy daydreaming to hear him.

"What are you thinking about over there?" Grandpa Joe asked.

"Oh, nothing," Kevin mumbled, still smiling to himself. Maybe one day he would live the dream.

"Okay, well it's time for a story," his grandfather said. "So gather around, close."

Kevin and Kali glanced at each other and rolled their eyes. Grandpa Joe always had crazy stories to tell around the bonfire, stories that were too far-fetched to believe. But the two siblings each grabbed a long stick, stuck marshmallows on their ends, started to roast them over the fire, and waited for their grandfather to begin.

“More than a century ago, my grandfather was out fishing on a night like this,” Grandpa Joe said in a hushed voice. “No one was out on the lake, and his was the only boat in sight. He and his buddy stayed out for a while, but then left because the fish weren’t biting.”

Kevin smashed his marshmallow between two graham crackers and a piece of chocolate. He took a messy bite, and Grandpa Joe continued, “On their way home, they drove to Lake Shore Drive, so they could see the lake in full view from up high. My grandpa said that he noticed something dark in the water—it looked like a log, but it was almost too big to be a piece of driftwood. He kept his eye on it for a while, and eventually...”—he paused for effect—“it moved.”

Kali let out a gasp. Her mouth and fingers were sticky from the gooey marshmallows. Kevin laughed, and then he asked, “Come on, are you saying that there’s some Cayuga Lake monster out there?”

“It’s Ol’ Greeny!” Grandpa Joe exclaimed. “Check the old papers in the early 1900s; the Ithaca Journal reporters wouldn’t even go near the lake for fear of being snatched up by the monster.”

“Were there other sightings?” Kali asked.

“Sure there were!” said Grandpa Joe. “In the 1970s, a kid claimed that he was bitten by Ol’ Greeny, and a boater said that he and his friends spotted something they thought was a huge log, but then it dived beneath the surface of the water.”

“Wow!” Kali exclaimed. Her eyes had grown twice in size, and her jaw dropped. Kevin giggled at the thought of her believing in these lake monster stories, but as he looked out over the water, he wondered if something strange was out there hiding in the deep.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What does Kevin dream of doing?

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2. Where does the story take place?

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3. Read these sentences from the story.

"'Okay, well it's time for a story,' his grandfather said. 'So gather around, close.' Kevin and Kali glanced at each other and rolled their eyes. Grandpa Joe always had crazy stories to tell around the bonfire, stories that were too far-fetched to believe."

Based on this evidence, what can you conclude about Kevin and Kali?

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4. Read these sentences from the story.

"My grandpa said that he noticed something dark in the water—it looked like a log, but it was almost too big to be a piece of driftwood. He kept his eye on it for a while, and eventually...—he paused for effect— 'it moved.'"

What "effect" is Grandpa Joe trying to produce?

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5. What is the main idea of this story?

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6. Read the sentences and answer the question.

"Kevin and Kali glanced at each other and rolled their eyes. Grandpa Joe always had crazy stories to tell around the bonfire, stories that were too far-fetched to believe."

What does the word "far-fetched" mean as used in this text?

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7. What word or phrase best completes the sentence?

Kevin and Kali roll their eyes when Grandpa Joe announces he's going to tell a story, \_\_\_\_\_ they listen to him anyway.

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8. What does Kevin wonder as he looks at the water at the end of the story?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. What evidence does Grandpa Joe give for the existence of the lake monster? Identify two pieces of evidence in the text.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Explain how Kevin feels about Grandpa Joe's story by the end of the text. Support your answer using evidence from the text.

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## Butterflies in Culture

*This text is provided courtesy of OLogy, the American Museum of Natural History's website for kids.*

Most people in Taiwan are Han Chinese. In Han culture, butterfly motifs are common in crafts, paintings, and even buildings.

To understand why butterflies are such popular symbols, look at the Chinese characters for "butterfly." The first character 蝴 (hú) has a similar sound as the character 福 (fú) for "good fortune." This is why butterflies are symbols of good luck. The second character 蝶 (dié) has the same sound as the character 耆 for "the elders." So butterflies are often seen in artwork celebrating a long life.

Butterflies carry meaning for Taiwan's indigenous groups, too. For the Rukai people, the butterfly is a symbol of swiftness when used on headdresses. It is a symbol of diligence when used on clothes. The Paiwan people use tribal beads of the Swallowtail to decorate a person who is fast and nimble. And the Tao tribe believe that Magellan's Iridescent Birdwing represents evil spirits.



*Photo Credit: © National Museum of Natural Science Taiwan*  
The annual Yellow Butterfly Festival celebrates and protects butterflies and their habitats. Organized by local people and conservation groups, the festival features performances, costumes, butterfly-watching hikes, and ceremonies to honor butterflies.



*Photo Credit: © National Museum of Natural Science Taiwan*  
In the Rukai tribe, wearing a butterfly headdress is a great honor granted by the chief. These men run so swiftly, they have won the title "lyalivarane." It means "butterfly"!

# Cats in the Catacombs

## By ReadWorks

Carlo hopped onto a marble slab. He was underground and it was dark, but he could see to the end of the tunnel. He pulled his tail around his four paws and began licking his fur. He was one of the ninth generation of cats to live in the catacombs. The catacombs are a series of tunnels below Rome, in Italy. Long ago, the ancient Romans buried people in the tunnels, and they were filled with tombs. Other cats might find it creepy to be around so many tombs. But Carlo was a Roman cat, and he had lived in the catacombs ever since he was a kitten.

“Meow?” Carlo heard the sound of another cat in the distance. It was probably his sister, returning from her nightly hunt. Just in case, Carlo jumped down and hid. If it was a strange cat, he didn’t want to be caught by surprise.

He heard the soft sound of paws on stone. The sound grew louder as the paws came closer. “Carlo? Are you there?” It was his sister, Daria.

Carlo sprang out from his hiding spot and his sister yowled in surprise.

“You scared me!” she said.

“I’m sorry, Daria,” said Carlo. “Did you find anything to eat?”

“I found three mice,” said Daria. “But I’ve already eaten them. You’ll have to hunt for yourself tonight. Be careful: there’s a tour group coming through.”

Daria and Carlo knew that they needed to be careful around humans. Tour groups often visited the catacombs. The humans brought lights with them and spent a lot of time staring at the stones. The tour guides didn’t like to see cats in the catacombs. Carlo did not understand why. After all, Carlo and Daria kept the mice away from the tour groups. Carlo did not know much about humans, but he knew that they liked mice even less than they liked cats.

“I’ll be careful,” said Carlo. “The tour group won’t even know I’m here.” Nobody knew the tunnels as well as Carlo and Daria. Even if the tour group saw Carlo, he would be able to outrun them.

Just then, the two cats heard a sound. CRASH! They froze, alert. “What was that?” asked Daria.

CRASH! The sound came again. This time it was closer.

Carlo began moving slowly toward the sound. He stayed close to the wall of the tunnel, sneaking along silently. CRASH! The noise continued. Carlo felt Daria moving behind him,



following him to the noise. They turned a corner and saw two huge men with a hammer. CRASH! One of the men was swinging the hammer against a tomb.

“Daria! They’re trying to rob the tomb!” shouted Carlo.

The men looked up at the sound of his meow. “Did you hear that, Fabio?” the larger man asked. “It sounded like a cat.”

“Don’t be crazy,” the other man answered. “No cat could live down here. There’s nothing to eat. It’s dark. A cat wouldn’t last a day.”

Just as the man finished his sentence, Daria sprang onto his back. The man screamed in pain as Daria’s claws dug into him. “Oooooow!” he cried.

Carlo dove toward the feet of the other man, knocking him off balance. The man fell with a thud, dropping the hammer.

Just then a light appeared in one of the nearby tunnels. A tour group had heard the noise and come to see what was making it. The tour leader shined his torch on the cats and robbers. The two robbers were lying on the floor, and two very happy cats were perched on top of them.

“Mamma mia!” said the tour guide. “These men were trying to rob the tombs!” The guide blew his emergency whistle, and soon the police arrived to arrest the two robbers. By the time the police got there, the cats were already gone. Carlo and Daria had disappeared in the chaos. They hid in the shadows and watched as the robbers were taken away.

From that day on, whenever that tour guide passed through the catacombs he would leave two pieces of cheese. Carlo and Daria had changed one tour guide’s mind. They thought that maybe one day all the tour guides would like having cats in the catacombs.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the catacombs?

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2. Who is the main character in the story?

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3. Read the following sentences from the text.

"Just as the man finished his sentence, Daria sprang onto his back. The man screamed in pain as Daria's claws dug into him. 'Oooooow!' he cried.  
"Carlo dove toward the feet of the other man, knocking him off balance. The man fell with a thud, dropping the hammer.  
"Just then a light appeared in one of the nearby tunnels. A tour group had heard the noise and come to see what was making it. The tour leader shined his torch on the cats and robbers. The two robbers were lying on the floor, and two very happy cats were perched on top of them."

Based on this evidence, how do Carlo and Daria protect the tomb?

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4. What evidence from the text shows that the tour guide has changed his mind about cats and that he likes having Carlo and Daria in the catacombs?

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5. What is the main idea of this story?

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6. Read the sentences and answer the question.

"Just then, the two cats heard a sound. CRASH! They froze, alert. 'What was that?' asked Daria.

"CRASH! The sound came again. This time it was closer."

What does the word "alert" mean as used in this text?

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7. What word or phrase best completes the sentence?

The tour guides don't like seeing cats in the catacombs, \_\_\_\_\_ Carlo doesn't understand why.

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8. What are the men with the hammer doing in the catacombs?

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9. What is the tour guide's opinion about cats at the end of the story? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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10. Read the sentences from the story.

"From that day on, whenever that tour guide passed through the catacombs he would leave two pieces of cheese. Carlo and Daria had changed one tour guide's mind. They thought that maybe one day all the tour guides would like having cats in the catacombs."

How did Carlo and Daria change the tour guide's mind about cats in the catacombs? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.

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# The Meadowlands

by ReadWorks



*The Meadowlands in New Jersey*

When they described the swamp at the end of Schuyler Avenue, the adults in Sarah's life seemed confused. Whenever she asked about it, Sarah's dad would chuckle.

"You'd better stay away from the Meadowlands," her father said.

Sarah's sixth grade teacher, Mr. Morrison, said only parts of the Meadowlands are swamps. He explained to the class that the Meadowlands are precious wetlands, one of the last places near New York City where birds migrating from Florida could stop and rest.

"The Meadowlands once had a lot of garbage dumps, which polluted the water pretty badly," Mr. Morrison said. "But most of the dumps are closed now. And the habitat for wild birds is recovering."

From her yard in the winter, the Meadowlands was as her dad described: brown, dead-looking weeds with Doritos bags lying at the water's edge. By springtime, however, the reeds turned green and flowers grew along the shoreline.

So which one is it, Sarah wondered. Is the Meadowlands a big, ugly, dangerous swamp? Or is it a beautiful oasis of birds and flowers? Despite her dad's warnings to stay away, Sarah wanted to see for herself. She went under the porch and dragged out her dad's old fiberglass

canoe. She threw the paddle and an old pink life jacket into the boat and dragged it across the yard, down Schuyler Avenue to the edge of the swamp.

Whatever it was, she saw now, the Meadowlands was big. Sarah always thought of it as the swamp at the end of her street. Now she realized that the wetlands actually stretched to the north and south, and she couldn't see either end. Directly across the water, the skyscrapers of Manhattan seemed to line the opposite shore, even though they were actually twelve miles away.

Sarah could feel the fear in her throat. But she didn't want to drag the canoe back up the hill. She zipped the life vest up to her neck, pushed the boat into the water and jumped in.

Past the reeds, she found herself paddling in a shallow pond surrounded by muddy islands. She saw ducks, swallows, yellow flowers, purple flowers, white egrets. A blue heron, disturbed by the splashes of Sarah's paddle, jumped into the air, uncurled its long wings and flapped away.

"This is all so beautiful!" Sarah thought.

The canoe slowed down, as if caught by invisible hands. Sarah looked down and saw the boat was scraping along the muddy bottom. Clouds of brown mud rose to the surface with every paddle stroke, and inside each cloud little bubbles of gas burst when they hit the surface. It smelled like a combination of old paint and rotting food. Sarah nearly threw up.

Soon she was stuck. She tried paddling backward to free the canoe from the mud, but each stroke released an overwhelming gas smell. She started to cry.

Just then something heavy and dark crashed through the weeds in front of the canoe.

A hand pulled the reeds apart, and out poked the head of Sarah's dad.

"Sarah! What are you doing out here?" he called.

Sarah tried to explain, but all she could do was cry.

"Well, it's a good thing you dragged the canoe-you left a trail in the gravel a mile wide," her dad said. "Here, take this rope."

He threw a yellow plastic rope, and after a few tries, Sarah grabbed it. Her dad pulled, and the boat skidded over the mud to shore.

Sarah worried that her father would be furious. But when he offered his hand to help her out

of the boat, he laughed.

"I did the same foolish thing when I was your age," he said. "Did I ever show you the otter den?"

Sarah wiped tears from her cheek and shook her head no.

"Well, c'mon. I'll show you," her dad said. "The swamps can be pretty disgusting, but there's some beautiful stuff in here. You just have to know where to look."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The adults in Sarah's life seem confused about what?

- A. New York City
- B. garbage dumps
- C. birds and wildlife
- D. the Meadowlands

2. Sarah takes her dad's canoe to explore the Meadowlands. What motivates Sarah's actions?

- A. She wants to know if the Meadowlands are an ugly swamp or a beautiful oasis.
- B. She wants to prove that her dad is wrong about the danger of the Meadowlands.
- C. She wants to study the Meadowlands to complete a class project.
- D. She wants to show her dad that she is brave and adventurous by exploring on her own.

3. There are different, contrasting opinions about the Meadowlands. What evidence from the story best supports this statement?

- A. Sarah doesn't know what the Meadowlands are really like, so she decides to go and see for herself.
- B. The Meadowlands used to be polluted by garbage dumps, but now the Meadowlands are recovering.
- C. Some say the Meadowlands are a dangerous swamp; other say they are a precious habitat for birds.
- D. Sarah's father warns her not to go to the Meadowlands, but Sarah ignores his warnings and visits them anyway.

4. Based on the story, what can you conclude about the Meadowlands?

- A. The Meadowlands are dangerous and should be left alone.
- B. The Meadowlands can be both beautiful and disgusting.
- C. The Meadowlands are always a beautiful and flowering oasis.
- D. The Meadowlands are still too polluted for animals to live there.



5. What is this story mostly about?

- A. Sarah goes to the Meadowlands, and her father gets mad at her.
- B. Sarah discovers that the Meadowlands are dangerous and ugly.
- C. Sarah asks her teacher about the history of the Meadowlands.
- D. Sarah goes to the Meadowlands to learn more about them.

6. Read the following sentences: "Well, the Meadowlands once had a lot of garbage dumps that polluted the water pretty badly. But most of the dumps are closed now. And the habitat for wild birds is **recovering**."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**recovering**" most nearly mean?

- A. getting better
- B. getting smaller
- C. getting older
- D. getting sick

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Sarah wants to see what the Meadowlands are like, \_\_\_\_\_ she takes her dad's canoe and paddles into the swamp.

- A. soon
- B. namely
- C. so
- D. but

8. According to Mr. Morrison, why are the Meadowlands precious?

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9. Why does Sarah start to cry in the Meadowlands?

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**10.** In the story, there are two different views of the Meadowlands: 1) the Meadowlands are a dangerous and ugly swamp, and 2) the Meadowlands are a beautiful and precious oasis. Which of these views (if any) accurately describes the Meadowlands? Support your answer using information from the story.

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# The Circus Comes to Town

By ReadWorks



Donald Seastrunk never feared the jugglers until they upgraded from bean bags to bowling pins. By the movie theater, after a movie let out, excited crowds gathered around the most skilled jugglers, whose silk vests were as blue as the sky. Winking and smiling, the jugglers performed astonishing feats: dozens of balls in the air at once; nifty, behind-the-back and through-the-legs tricks; even juggling blindfolded. Word of mouth spread to neighboring towns. People from far away came to see the street performers. All seemed well and good, but with the jugglers' popularity came copycats. And so many of them!

On the side streets and quiet walkways, juggling copycats blundered through their simple routines. A ball or two rolling into the street was the worst of it, at first. But when the very best jugglers switched to bowling pins to freshen up their act, the bad jugglers copied this, too. For Donald Seastrunk, the juggling problem came to a head one May morning, as he hurried from his car up the path to the library. Just as he thought he was safe, a stray bowling pin spiraled through the air and whomped him on the head.

The next day it was crazy at Town Hall, too. Mayor Marjorie Arnold sighed at her desk. She had just read Donald Seastrunk's angry email, which Donald had sent to dozens of friends,

the town council, and the mayor's office. This wasn't the first complaint the mayor had received about the jugglers. But what could she do? Some people were mad, but others loved the jugglers. After all, the town was practically famous now, and people were proud to be from a famous town. The biggest newspaper in the state capital had even written an article about the jugglers. And think of all the money the crowds spent at local stores! The mayor chewed her pen. She tapped her foot furiously. She sighed so strongly that important documents blew off her desk, and this made her sigh again.

Whenever she found herself in trouble, Mayor Arnold liked to hold imaginary conversations with the golden cat statue on her desk. With another heavy sigh, she asked it for advice.

"Why not pass a law banning juggling in public?" it seemed to say.

"The mayor can't just pass whatever laws she wants," said Mayor Arnold. "Laws are passed by the town council." With a groan, the mayor rose from her leather chair and stood at the window, looking at the trees in full bloom on the town green. One tree had a bowling pin caught in the branches.

The mayor imagined the cat's voice dropping to a whisper. "Why not order the police to fine the jugglers for disturbing the peace?"

"That's no good," the mayor said. She rested her forehead on the cool window and closed her eyes. "What if the jugglers sue us? Then the case would go to court, and the town could lose a lot of money!"

The golden cat statue made no reply. The mayor was by herself. She heard what sounded like the distant rumble of thunder. Thunder? There wasn't a cloud in the sky! Without taking her forehead off the window, Mayor Arnold opened her eyes. What she saw next made her jump up with a squeak. A crowd of people were marching up the long street that led to Town Hall, and at the crowd's front was Donald Seastrunk himself. They pumped their fists in the air and waved signs. An anti-juggler protest! Mayor Arnold sighed. It was going to be a long day.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the town in the passage famous for?

- A tightrope walkers
- B jugglers
- C bowling pins
- D circus elephants

2. What main problem does Mayor Arnold face?

- A People are complaining about the jugglers, and she doesn't know what to do.
- B Donald Seastrunk is hit in the head by a juggler's stray bowling pin.
- C She holds imaginary conversations with the golden cat statue in her office.
- D The jugglers might sue the city if they were fined for disturbing the peace.

3. While many people are happy to live in a famous town, not everyone is happy about the jugglers. What evidence from the passage supports this conclusion?

- A The biggest newspaper in the state capital writes an article about the jugglers.
- B Excited crowds gather around the skilled jugglers outside the movie theater.
- C Donald Seastrunk leads a crowd in an anti-juggler protest.
- D Donald Seastrunk is hit in the head by a bowling pin.

4. Read the following sentences: "The mayor chewed her pen. She tapped her foot furiously. She sighed so strongly that important documents blew off her desk, and this made her sigh again."

Based on this description, how is Mayor Arnold most likely feeling?

- A inspired
- B upbeat
- C lonely
- D frustrated

5. What is this story mostly about?

- A how Mayor Arnold makes decisions
- B problems caused by jugglers in a town
- C the dangers of increased numbers of copycat jugglers
- D the routines performed by skilled jugglers

6. Read the following sentence: "Winking and smiling, the jugglers performed **astonishing** feats: dozens of balls in the air at once; nifty, behind-the-back and through-the-legs tricks; even juggling blindfolded."

What does the word "**astonishing**" mean as used in this sentence?

- A unsurprising
- B realistic
- C colorful
- D amazing

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

The jugglers bring tourists and money to the town; \_\_\_\_\_, the jugglers disturb the peace and annoy some citizens.

- A on the other hand
- B initially
- C above all
- D as a result

8. Why does Donald Seastrunk send an email to the mayor's office?

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9. Why can't the mayor order the police to fine the jugglers for disturbing the peace?

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10. Explain why the issue of the jugglers is so difficult for Mayor Arnold. Support your answer using information from the passage.

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# Pythons Invade the Florida Everglades

by ReadWorks



When Tommy Owen, a tour guide in the Everglades National Park, saw the animal, he immediately went after it. Owen was giving a tour of Florida's famous national park wetlands. He and a group of tourists were floating in a boat through the shallow water that makes up the Everglades. One of the women in the boat he was steering saw a snake in the water. She got Tommy's attention and pointed the snake out to him. When Tommy saw the snake, he acted fast. He reached into the water and grabbed the animal by the head. He got a good grip and didn't let go. Tourists in the boat were worried when the snake wrapped itself around Tommy's arm. After several minutes, he got control of the animal and removed it from the water. The snake was a ten-foot-long Burmese python. It was a snake not native to Florida and, quite simply, it didn't belong there.

\* \* \*

The Florida Everglades teems with life. Situated at the southern end of the state, between Lake Okeechobee and the Gulf Coast, the Everglades is the largest wilderness east of the Mississippi River. Migratory and wading birds tiptoe through marshy grasslands. Orchids and ferns dot the hardwood forests. Alligators lounge in the shallows and on muddy riverbanks. Mangrove leaves rustle in the wind as the brackish water laps at their roots.



All of this life is made possible by the presence of water. The Everglades is a natural region of subtropical wetlands. Water flows from the Kissimmee River into the wide, shallow Lake Okeechobee. From there the lake drains south, into the Everglades marsh and the Florida flats. The Everglades is sometimes called the "River of Grass" after a book of the same name by author Marjory Stoneman Douglas. The phrase illustrates the fact that the Everglades is basically a very wide and shallow river.

The Florida Everglades once covered 11,000 square miles across the southern end of the state. Wetlands are an important ecosystem. For centuries, however, humans thought of wetlands as unhygienic swamps. Draining the Everglades was suggested in the late 19th century. As soon as Florida became a state in 1845, its legislature asked permission from Congress to drain the Everglades. Canals were dug to remove or redirect the water. Land that dried out was reclaimed for agriculture or building purposes. This reclamation allowed for significant development in south Florida. Sugar farmers moved into the area and prospered. The city of Miami took root.

Approximately 50% of the Everglades was reclaimed for agricultural or urban use. Much of the northern area was polluted with phosphorus. This phosphorus was agricultural runoff from the farms near the Everglades.

Concerned Floridians began advocating for saving the area in the 1930s. Their efforts paid off in 1947 when Congress created the Everglades National Park. Starting in the late 1970s, environmental concerns at both the national and international levels refocused attention on the Everglades. The area was designated as one of the world's most important wetland areas.

Since then efforts have been underway to safeguard the park and return the Everglades to health. Water levels are monitored, as are nutrient levels in both water and soil samples.

Much of the conservation project was designed to reverse-engineer the canal system that was built in the 19th and mid-20th centuries. By the mid-2010s, ecological indicators showed some improvements. For example, the crayfish population was up. Wading and migratory birds improved their nesting habits.

Despite conservation efforts, the Everglades ecosystem began facing another threat in the early 2000s.

\* \* \*

Burmese pythons were breeding in the Everglades, and they reached numbers that designated them as an invasive species. They were classified as an invasive species when

their population swelled to a large size.

Pythons are eating machines. They can eat animals of different sizes, from mice to deer. They especially enjoy dining on small mammals and birds. Studies have shown that since the appearance of Burmese pythons in the Everglades, the numbers of small mammals in the area dropped significantly. This population loss was not observed in areas where the Burmese python had not established itself.

The Burmese python is native to tropical and subtropical zones in Southeast Asia. In their native habitat, Burmese pythons are nocturnal carnivores. When they live close to human habitations, Burmese pythons eat rats, mice, and rabbits that are attracted to human dwellings and farms. They can also eat small farm animals like chickens. When they live away from human habitations, Burmese pythons eat birds and small wild mammals. The Burmese python is a solitary animal. It kills by constricting its body around its prey. Python eggs and hatchlings are a food source for other animals. In the wild, Burmese pythons grow to be on average 12 feet long. (Habitat loss and the exotic pet trade in Asia are depleting the Burmese python's numbers in the Asian wild.)

The first Burmese python was found in the Florida Everglades in 1979. It's presumed the animal was originally kept as a pet and then released by its owner. It was removed, but that wasn't the last of Burmese pythons in south Florida. It's thought that numerous Burmese pythons escaped pet stores and cages damaged in Hurricane Andrew in 1992. Since then, the numbers of Burmese pythons grew at a fast rate. The escaped Burmese pythons weren't the only cause of the most recent population increase of Burmese pythons.

In the United States the Burmese python was a popular exotic pet. Docile and beautifully patterned in brown and gold diamond shapes, these snakes could be purchased at pet stores or reptile shows. Owners kept them in cages or tanks and fed them rats or mice. Most people bought Burmese pythons when they were small. Burmese pythons grow very quickly. For many pet owners, the pet Burmese pythons became too big to manage. So they released them into the wild.

When the Burmese python was designated as an invasive species, many agencies and individuals began trying to put a stop to the python invasion. The National Park Service started a program to study these animals in the Florida Everglades. Park Service scientists implanted tracking devices into seventeen large pythons that were later re-released into the wild. They provided scientists with information regarding python behavior.

In January 2013 to February 2013, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission ran a contest called the 2013 Python Challenge. The Commission issued permits to hunt the

snakes within state wildlife-managed areas of the Everglades. Sixty-eight Burmese pythons were captured.

Later in 2013, Jason Leon was driving in a rural area near Florida City when he spotted a Burmese python's head protruding from the brush. The man was a biologist, and he was familiar with pythons. He approached the snake and pulled it out of the bush. The animal was bigger than he expected. After a struggle with the animal, Leon killed it. The Burmese python was 128 pounds and longer than 18 feet. Leon contacted the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which agreed to pick up and examine the snake. The snake was found to be the largest ever in the state of Florida.

The state later issued a statement:

Jason Leon's nighttime sighting and capture of a Burmese python of more than 18 feet in length is a notable accomplishment that set a Florida record. The Florida Wildlife Commission is grateful to him both for safely removing such a large Burmese python, and for reporting its capture.

Despite these efforts, the population of Burmese pythons continued to grow. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission held another contest in 2016 called the 2016 Python Challenge.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. In which place did the Burmese python become an invasive species?

- A. southwest Asia
- B. southeast Asia
- C. the Mojave Desert
- D. the Florida Everglades

2. Fifty percent of the Everglades was reclaimed for agricultural or urban use. Which of the following is an effect of this agricultural or urban use?

- A. The Burmese pythons spread throughout the Everglades.
- B. The crayfish population increased.
- C. Much of the northern area of the Everglades was polluted with phosphorous.
- D. Significant developments in surrounding states took place.

3. The decreasing numbers of small mammals in the Everglades was most likely due to the presence of Burmese pythons in the area. Which of the following evidence from the text best supports this conclusion?

- A. Python eggs and hatchlings are a food source for other animals.
- B. The Burmese pythons reached numbers that designate them as invasive species in the Everglades.
- C. The population loss of small mammals was not observed in areas where the python had not established itself.
- D. The first Burmese python found in Florida was probably kept as a pet and then released by its owner.

4. Based on the information in the passage, what kind of effect did Burmese pythons have on the Everglades?

- A. They had a mainly positive effect.
- B. They had both a negative and positive effect.
- C. They had no effect on the Everglades.
- D. They had a mainly negative effect.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A. how Jason Leon was able to capture and kill a Burmese python
- B. the reclamation of the Florida Everglades for agricultural and urban use
- C. the Florida Everglades and the Burmese pythons that live in them
- D. efforts to decrease the number of Burmese pythons in the Florida Everglades

6. Read the following sentences from the text.

"Since then efforts have been underway to safeguard the park and return the Everglades to health. Water levels are monitored, as are nutrient levels in both water and soil samples.

"Much of the conservation project was designed to reverse-engineer the canal system that was built in the 19th and mid-20th centuries. By the mid-2010s, ecological indicators showed some improvements."

Based on the text, what does "conservation" most nearly mean?

- A. preservation and protection
- B. destruction and damage
- C. elimination or deletion
- D. discovery and exploration

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

The Burmese python is native to tropical and subtropical zones in Southeast Asia, \_\_\_\_\_ it managed to establish itself in the Florida Everglades.

- A. since
- B. so
- C. but
- D. because

**8.** The reclamation of the Everglades for agricultural and urban use had harmful effects on the Everglades. List at least two of these harmful effects.

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**9.** How did the python invasion of the Everglades affect the other animals that live in the Everglades?

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**10.** Identify the two main threats to the Everglades mentioned in the passage, and describe the efforts to fight these two threats.

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# What's the Big Idea about Archaeology?

This text is provided courtesy of OLogy, the American Museum of Natural History's website for kids.



Photo Credit: courtesy of AMNH (top and bottom)

## Piecing Together the Puzzle of History

How do we know about people who lived in ancient times? If people didn't leave behind any written records, how do we know what gods they worshiped, what food they ate, or what clothes they wore?

One of the ways we know about people who lived long ago is through archaeology: the study of past life through what's been left behind.

An archaeologist might find a pot, a grave, or the remains of a building. Each discovery is like a piece of a puzzle. The archaeologist works to put these pieces together to create a picture of what life was like long ago.



Photo Credit: courtesy of Christina Elson (top); courtesy of AMNH (bottom)

## Clues to the Past

Anthropologists study people and cultures, both in the past and in the present. Archaeology is a special branch of anthropology which focuses on the past.

Like all scientists, archaeologists start with a question they want to explore, such as "Why was this ancient city abandoned?" Then, they gather evidence by digging in the field. Back in the lab, they analyze their evidence. Finally, they share their results with others.



An excavation takes a whole team.



Sometimes there are clues right on the surface, like the remains of a building.

Photo Credit: courtesy of Chuck Spencer (top and bottom)

## Fieldwork Is Where They Dig In

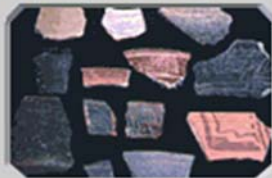
It's not easy finding the remains of an ancient culture. As years pass, buildings and artifacts get buried under dirt, rubble, or even other settlements. Archaeologists have to dig underground to find these remains. But finding the right place, or "site," to dig is the first challenge.

Archaeologists don't just dig anywhere. They look for a site they think will help answer their questions about the people or time they are studying.

This takes a lot of planning and research. Before digging begins, archaeologists survey the site, and then they create a map of it to help them decide where to dig.



"Features" are things that cannot be moved, like a house or a burial site.



Pieces of pottery are the most common artifacts found on a site.

Photo Credit: courtesy of Christina Elson (top and bottom)

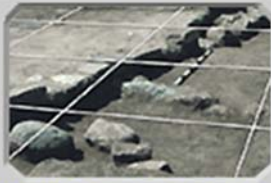
## Evidence of an Era

There are many kinds of evidence that teach us about the past: majestic pyramids, the ruins of an ancient city, pieces of pottery, even a simple trash pit.

Every piece of evidence has one thing in common—it's lasted a long time.

Most things from the past, like fabric, wood, and food, decay over time. Things made of clay, metal, and stone survive much longer. What survives also depends on the environment. In a rain forest, a wooden spear would rot and decay. But in a desert, the same spear might be preserved by the dry air.





Grids help mark the location of an object compared to the other things around it.



Archaeologists often draw what they find at a site.

## Recording the Remains

When a site is excavated, it is also destroyed. That's why it's so important to keep accurate, detailed records of everything on a site.

When archaeologists dig, they create a grid to keep track of where they find things. They also draw pictures and take photographs of everything they find.

All this information helps archaeologists re-create a picture of the site later. These records will be shared with other scientists interested in that site. They're also left for future generations of scientists, like you!

Credit: courtesy of Chuck Spencer (top photo); Christina Elson (bottom illustration)



The dates on coins help determine the age of artifacts found nearby.



Aerial photographs like this one can show the entire site.

## Making Discoveries in the Lab

When archaeologists complete an excavation, work in the lab begins. This is where they analyze their findings by carefully measuring, weighing, drawing, and comparing. They try to answer questions about when an object was made and how it was used. They can learn even more by looking at objects found together as a group.

Archaeologists publish what they've learned in books and articles. They might support or challenge other theories. Most importantly, they're bringing new ideas to the debate. And that's what science is all about!

Photo Credit: courtesy of AMNH (top); courtesy of Chuck Spencer (bottom)



At the Museum, each artifact has a number and a description, so it can be easily found.



Many of the artifacts are from the "New World," from cultures such as the Incas and the Aztecs.

## Into the Collections

Many places, like the American Museum of Natural History, collect artifacts from around the world. The artifacts on display at the Museum are only a fraction of these huge collections. Rows of cabinets are filled with thousands of artifacts, like bowls, tools, masks, and textiles.

Scientists use the collections like a library. They come to observe objects for their own research.

These collections give people a chance to see artifacts from faraway places and ancient cultures that disappeared long ago.

*Photo Credit: courtesy of AMNH (top); courtesy of Christina Elson (bottom)*

## Sunrise, Sunset...or Not?



The sun is a wonderful thing for Earth. It is a star that heats the planet and makes life on Earth possible. In addition, its light shines onto the planet. It is Earth's ultimate source of energy.

Summer days may be longer than winter days, but for most people, the sun seems to do the same thing each day: it appears to come up in the east for the day, and it appears to go down in the west for the night. The sun looks like it rises in the east and sets in the west because of how the earth spins in space. It spins toward the east, or counterclockwise. This means that when most people look at the sky in the morning, the sun will first appear in the east.

The earth takes 24 hours to complete one turn. For most places on Earth, there is a daytime and nighttime every 24 hours. But in some places for many days at a time, the sun might stay up in the sky, or it might not even come up above the horizon.

In some parts of the world, the sun can be up in the sky for months. During part of the spring and summer in Earth's Northern Hemisphere, the Northern Hemisphere is tilted towards the sun so much that the sun in northern Alaska, which is located in the Arctic Circle, never goes below the horizon. The Arctic Circle is an area at the top of the earth. In Barrow, Alaska, the sun doesn't set for almost three months! This phenomenon is called the midnight sun, when the sun has not set at midnight. Try sleeping through that!

During parts of the fall and winter in Earth's Northern Hemisphere, the Northern Hemisphere is tilted in such a way that the sun doesn't come over the horizon in northern Alaska for a little

over two months. Therefore, nights last more than 24 hours. This phenomenon is called the polar night. Although the sun never rises above the horizon during parts of the fall and winter in the Arctic Circle, enough light often shines so that people who live there don't need flashlights to walk around outside.

It may be hard for many people to get through these times of very little or prolonged sunlight. But arctic plants and wildlife have adapted to these seasons of long days and long nights. In the arctic winter, some animals hibernate, and others travel south to where there is more sunlight.

In the arctic summer, there are pools of still water from melted ice, and the 24-hour sunlight warms the Arctic Circle. These conditions are favorable for mosquitoes, which lay their eggs on the surface of water, to thrive. The birds that eat these insects now have plenty of food in the arctic summer. For animals like caribou that mainly eat plants, they can easily find food during the long days of summer.

Most animals, including humans, are used to a period of sunlight and a period of no sunlight every 24 hours. In places where there are months when the sun continuously stays above the horizon or below the horizon, living things have had to adapt to survive.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the sun?

- A a planet that can only be seen from northern Alaska
- B an asteroid that shines light onto the earth
- C a star that can only be seen from northern Alaska
- D a star that shines light onto the earth

2. The midnight sun in northern Alaska is an effect described in the passage. What is its cause?

- A animals moving south in the winter
- B getting a sunburn in the winter
- C the Northern Hemisphere tilting away from the sun
- D the Northern Hemisphere tilting toward the sun

3. Read the following sentences: "During part of the spring and summer in Earth's Northern Hemisphere, the Northern Hemisphere is tilted towards the sun so much that the sun in northern Alaska, which is located in the Arctic Circle, never goes below the horizon. . . . During parts of the fall and winter in Earth's Northern Hemisphere, the Northern Hemisphere is tilted in such a way that the sun doesn't come over the horizon in northern Alaska for a little over two months."

What conclusion about the impact of the tilt of the earth does this information support?

- A The tilt of the earth has no impact on the amount of sunlight different parts of the earth receive.
- B The tilt of the earth has an impact on how fast the earth moves around the sun.
- C The tilt of the earth has an impact on the amount of sunlight different parts of the earth receive.
- D The tilt of the earth has an impact on how fast the Earth rotates on its axis.

4. Based on the text, how does the Northern Hemisphere tilt during the Northern Hemisphere's winter months?

- A away from the sun
- B towards the sun
- C away from the moon
- D towards the moon

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A the town of Barrow, Alaska, and what people there do in the arctic summer
- B sunrise, sunset, midnight sun, and polar night
- C mosquitos, caribou, and adult birds
- D how living things have adapted to survive the arctic summer and winter

6. Read the following sentences: "During some of the spring and summer in Earth's Northern Hemisphere, the Northern Hemisphere is tilted towards the sun so much that the sun in northern Alaska, which is located in the Arctic Circle, never goes below the horizon. In Barrow, Alaska, the sun doesn't set for almost three months! This **phenomenon** is called the midnight sun, when the sun has not set at midnight."

What does the word "**phenomenon**" mean above?

- A large body of water
- B event or occurrence
- C big problem or disaster
- D the study of stars, planets, and space

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

The midnight sun is when the sun never sets; \_\_\_\_\_, the polar night is when the sun never rises.

- A for instance
- B most importantly
- C in contrast
- D in the end

8. How does the Northern Hemisphere of the earth tilt when northern Alaska is experiencing the midnight sun?

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9. How does the Northern Hemisphere of the earth tilt when northern Alaska is experiencing the polar night? Use information from the text to support your answer.

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10. How does the earth's tilt affect the earth? Use information from the text to support your answer.

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