

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Academic Vocabulary

Read the short story and answer each question.



Built to Survive

From frozen tundras to burning deserts, animals live in some of the toughest places on Earth. Their survival depends on **adaptations**—special features or behaviors that help them live in extreme conditions.

Adaptations come in two main types: **physical** and **behavioral**.

A **physical adaptation** is a change in an animal's body. For example, the Arctic fox has thick white fur. The fur keeps it warm and helps it blend into snowy surroundings. The camel has large feet that help it walk on sand without sinking and stores fat in its hump to survive without food for days.

A **behavioral adaptation** is something an animal does. For example, the fennec fox sleeps during the hot day and comes out at night. This behavior helps it avoid the desert heat. Penguins huddle in large groups to stay warm in Antarctica's freezing wind.

Some animals even slow down their body processes during dangerous times. This is called **hibernation**, and it's a behavior used by bears to survive winter when food is hard to find.

Another important adaptation is **camouflage**. This means the animal's colors or patterns help it hide from predators or sneak up on prey.

These features may seem simple, but each one plays a powerful role in helping animals survive where few others can.



Name: _____

Built to Survive

1. What does the word *adaptation* mean in the passage?

- A. A place where animals live
- B. A change in behavior or body that helps an animal survive
- C. A type of animal found in the jungle
- D. A machine scientists use to study animals

2. What is *camouflage* used for, according to the text?

- A. To keep animals dry
- B. To help animals find new homes
- C. To help animals hide or sneak up on prey
- D. To cool off after running

3. Fill in the blank:

When an animal goes into a deep sleep to save energy and survive without food, it is called _____.

4. Pick one physical adaptation and one behavioral adaptation. Use the text to explain what each one means and how it helps the animal.

5. Why is it helpful for readers to know what *camouflage* and *hibernation* mean when learning about survival?



Instructional Guide

Guide Reading Level: R

Lexile Level: 790L-940L

Grade Level: 4th Grade, Middle of the Year

Genre: Informational Nonfiction – Life Science

Introducing the Text

“Today we’ll read about animals that survive in some of the harshest places on Earth. We’ll focus on important science words like *adaptation*, *camouflage*, and *hibernation*, and practice using clues in the text to figure out what they mean.”

Vocabulary: adaptation, physical, behavioral, camouflage, hibernation

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you think it means when an animal “adapts” to its environment?
 2. Can you name a place on Earth that would be hard to survive in?
 3. Why might animals in those places look or act differently than other animals?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. What are the two types of adaptations described in the text?
 2. How does the camel’s body help it live in the desert?
 3. What is one behavior the fennec fox uses to stay safe?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between a physical and behavioral adaptation?
 2. How do the words *camouflage* and *hibernation* help explain how animals survive?
 3. How can we figure out what domain-specific words mean even if we don’t know them yet?
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Activity Idea

Give students a foldable or chart with two columns: Physical Adaptations and Behavioral Adaptations. Have them list examples from the text and draw a matching animal. Then, ask them to write a sentence for each vocabulary word using clues from the passage to show its meaning.

