

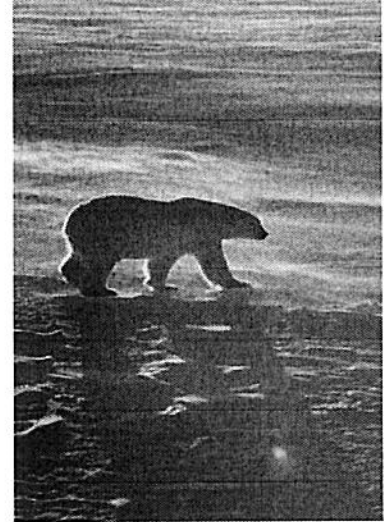
Name: _____

The Amazingly Adapted Polar Bear

by Guy Belleranti

Animals have special adaptations that help them survive in their habitats. One of the most interesting is the polar bear of the Arctic.

To stay warm, polar bears have two layers of fur. The hairs of the outer coat are hollow, increasing their insulating ability. They also have a thick, warm coat of fur below the outer coat. Underneath their fur polar bears have black skin which helps absorb heat. Underneath this skin polar bears can put on a layer of fat for even more insulation. In fact, during the cold of winter this fat may be over 4 inches thick!



Polar bears in warm-weather zoos can also adapt quite well. Their hollow hairs hold water, providing cooling. When living in a warm climate, they don't put on the thick fat layer because extra insulation isn't needed.

While polar bears do occasionally eat sea vegetation and berries, they prefer to hunt. In fact, they are the best hunters of all bears. When on land they often camouflage themselves by placing their paws over their black nose and mouth. Polar bears have the best vision of any bear and an excellent sense of smell. Fur and rough bumps on the soles of their wide snowshoe-like feet provide traction on ice.



Polar bears are well adapted for swimming to ice floes in search of their favorite food - seals. They use their partially webbed front feet to paddle, while steering with their back feet. They have a more elongated body and head than other bears. This shape helps them move through the water. In fact, this marine mammal can swim for 60 miles without stopping.

About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences working with animals and teaching others.

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1. What color is a polar bear's skin?
 - a. white
 - b. gray
 - c. light yellow
 - d. black

2. How does a polar bear's skin color help it to survive in the cold winter?

3. Are polar bears carnivores, herbivores, or omnivores? _____

4. How does the elongated head and body of a polar bear help it to survive?
 - a. They help the polar bear hide in the snow.
 - b. They help the polar bear swim through water more quickly.
 - c. They help keep the polar bear warm.
 - d. They help polar bears find berries and sea vegetation.

5. Read the following sentence from the article.

This marine mammal can swim for 60 miles without stopping.

Which is the best definition for the underlined word.
 - a. animal from the Arctic
 - b. animal that does not get tired easily
 - c. animal that spends a lot of time in the water
 - d. animal with four legs

6. Read the following sentence from the article.

Fur and rough bumps on the soles of their wide snowshoe-like feet provide traction on ice.

Which is the best definition for the underlined word.
 - a. ability to avoid slipping
 - b. ability to jump high
 - c. ability to slide on something
 - d. ability to keep warm

Fact and Opinion

A fact is something that can be proven true. An opinion is a feeling or belief about something and cannot be proven true.

Directions: Read each sentence. Write fact next to each statement that is a fact and opinion next to each statement that is an opinion.

1. _____ Football is a fun sport.
2. _____ A skateboard has four wheels.
3. _____ A bowling ball has three holes in it.
4. _____ Baseball is better than hockey.
5. _____ Ice hockey is played with sticks and a puck.
6. _____ Yo-Yo tricks are really exciting!
7. _____ Tennis can be played on grass or clay courts.
8. _____ Being a soccer goalie is easy.
9. _____ In basketball, a free throw is worth one point.
10. _____ Swimming is a water sport.





Creative Writing

Look at the image below and describe what you see. Use the words from the word bank to create a story about the picture. Start here, and use a separate sheet of paper if you need to.

Above all, be creative!

Word Bank

SNOW

CITY

FREEZING

SILENT

JOYFUL

SWIFT

PLEASANT

ICY

COOL

WHIMSICAL



Thinking It Through

Read the following passage, and then answer the question that follows.

Michigan and Florida are in different parts of our country. Florida is in the south. It is warm in most of Florida most of the year. Sometimes it is very hot. This allows farmers to grow crops such as oranges and coconuts. Michigan is in the north. It has four seasons with great ranges in temperature. It is hot in the summer, and cold and snowy in the winter. Autumn is a beautiful time in Michigan. The leaves on the trees change colors and then fall to the ground. Many fruits are grown in Michigan from spring to fall, such as blueberries, apples, and cherries.

The passage states that Michigan and Florida have different weather. How does the climate affect what grows in these areas? Use details from the text to support your answer.

HINT

What does the author write about the weather in each state, and the seasons during which certain crops can grow?

