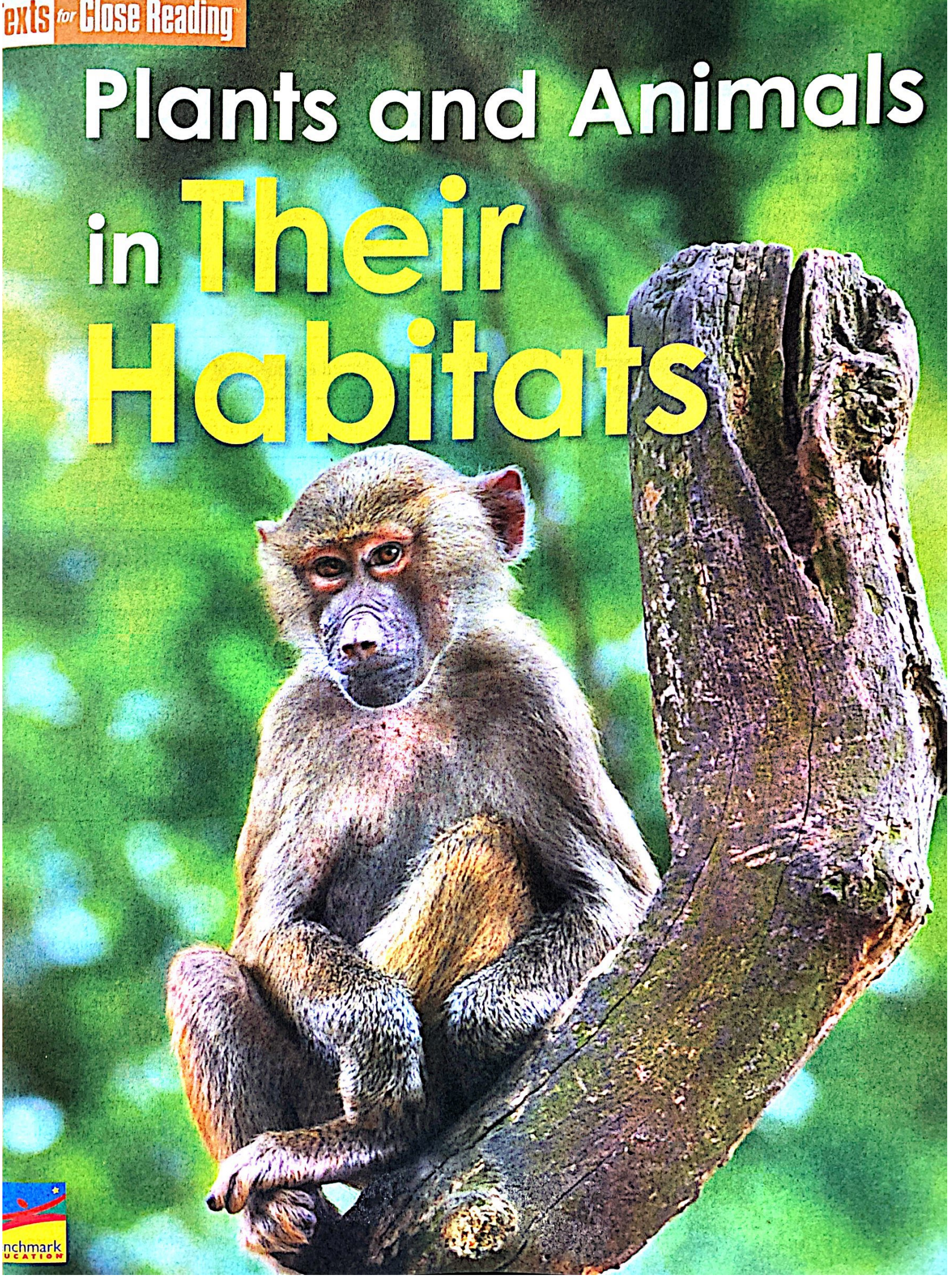
Texts for Close Reading™

Plants and Animals in Their Habitats



Benchmark Education

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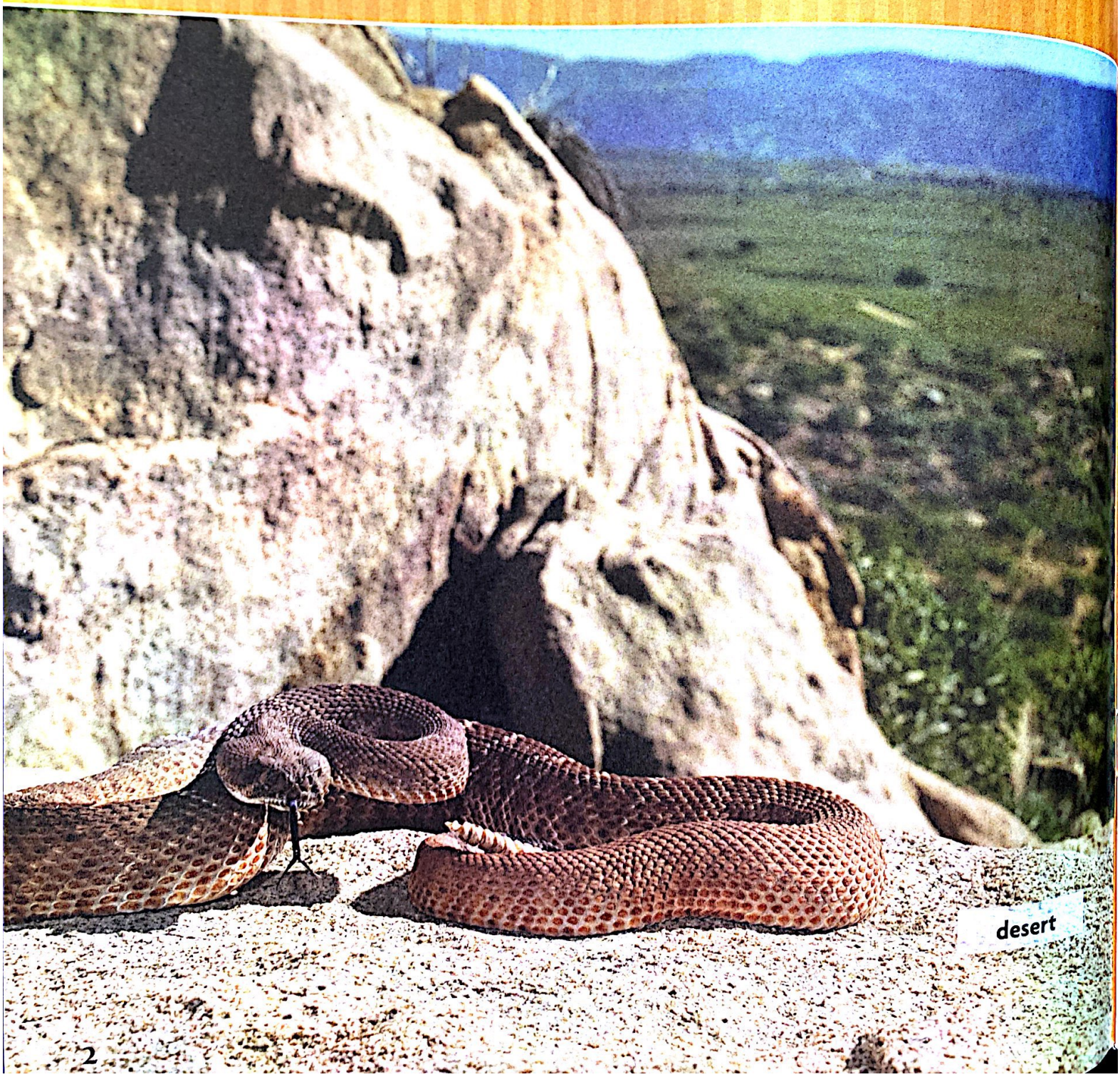
Essential Question

How do living things get what they need to survive?



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Remember to annotate as you read.

Notes

News About Scorpions

1 With its curved tail, eight legs, and poisonous sting, a scorpion can be scary. Spiders and scorpions are both arachnids. Some people think scorpions look more like tiny lobsters than like spiders.

2 Scorpions live in warm, dry places. At night, they search for food. They use their pincers to catch insects. Scorpions are not aggressive. But if they are cornered, their sting can be painful, and even deadly.

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Notes

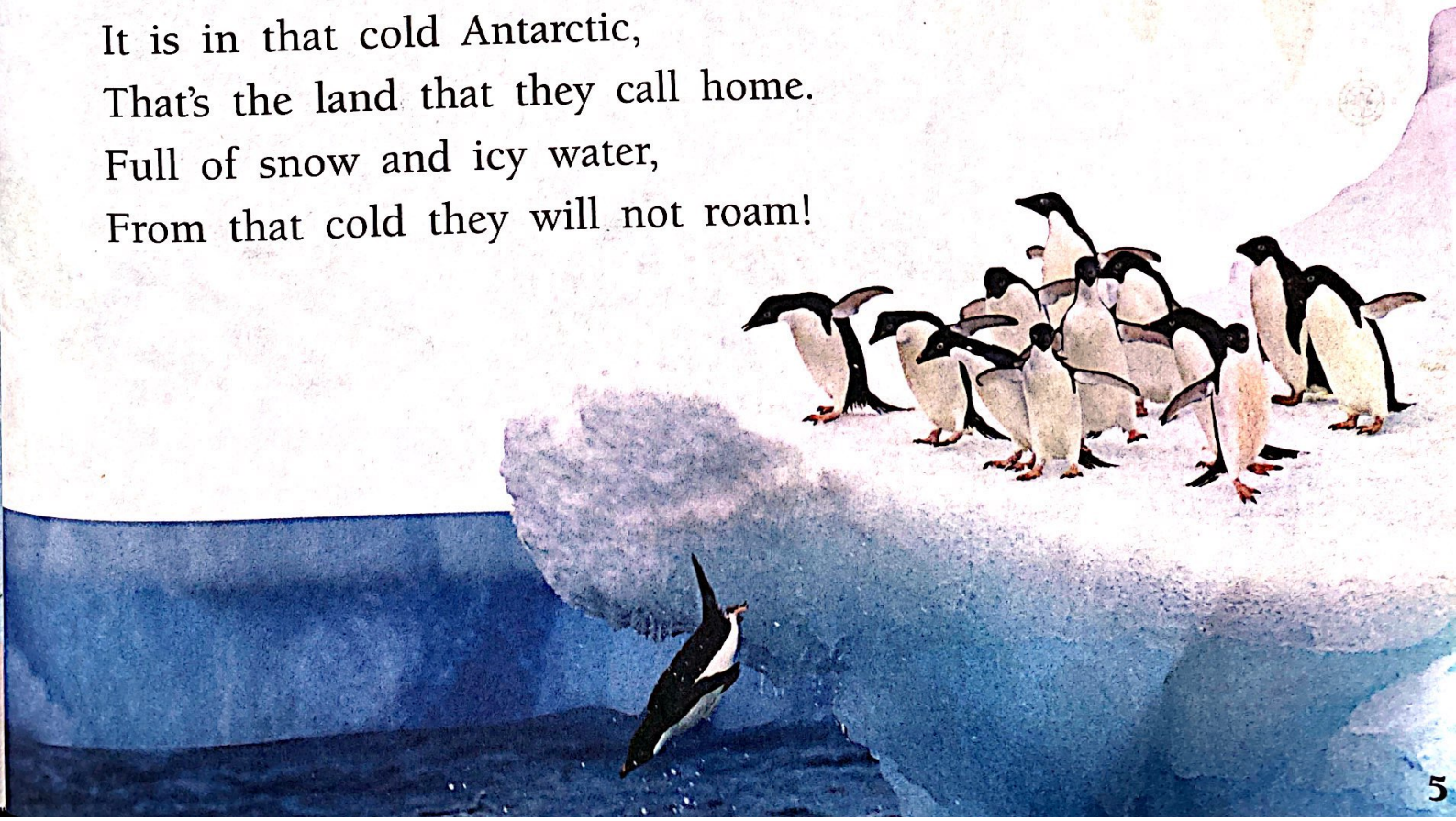
All the Penguins

They are playing on an ice patch,
They are jumping in the sea.
All the penguins are together,
Having fun so playfully!

There are big ones, there are small ones,
And then some are in between.
But they're having fun together,
Where the air is cold and clean.

When they walk, they kind of waddle,
Back and forth from side to side,
Playing in the cold Antarctic,
They would never come inside!

It is in that cold Antarctic,
That's the land that they call home.
Full of snow and icy water,
From that cold they will not roam!



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Short Read 1

Remember to annotate as you read.

Notes

The Coldest Place on Earth

1 *Brrrr.* Covered by a thick blanket of snow and ice that never melts, Antarctica is the iciest, windiest, and emptiest place on Earth. Its barren landscape has no trees and few plants. Some people visit, but none live there. Only a few tough animals can survive Antarctica's harsh winters. One of them is an amazing bird.

▼ **Antarctica is the frozen land around the South Pole.**

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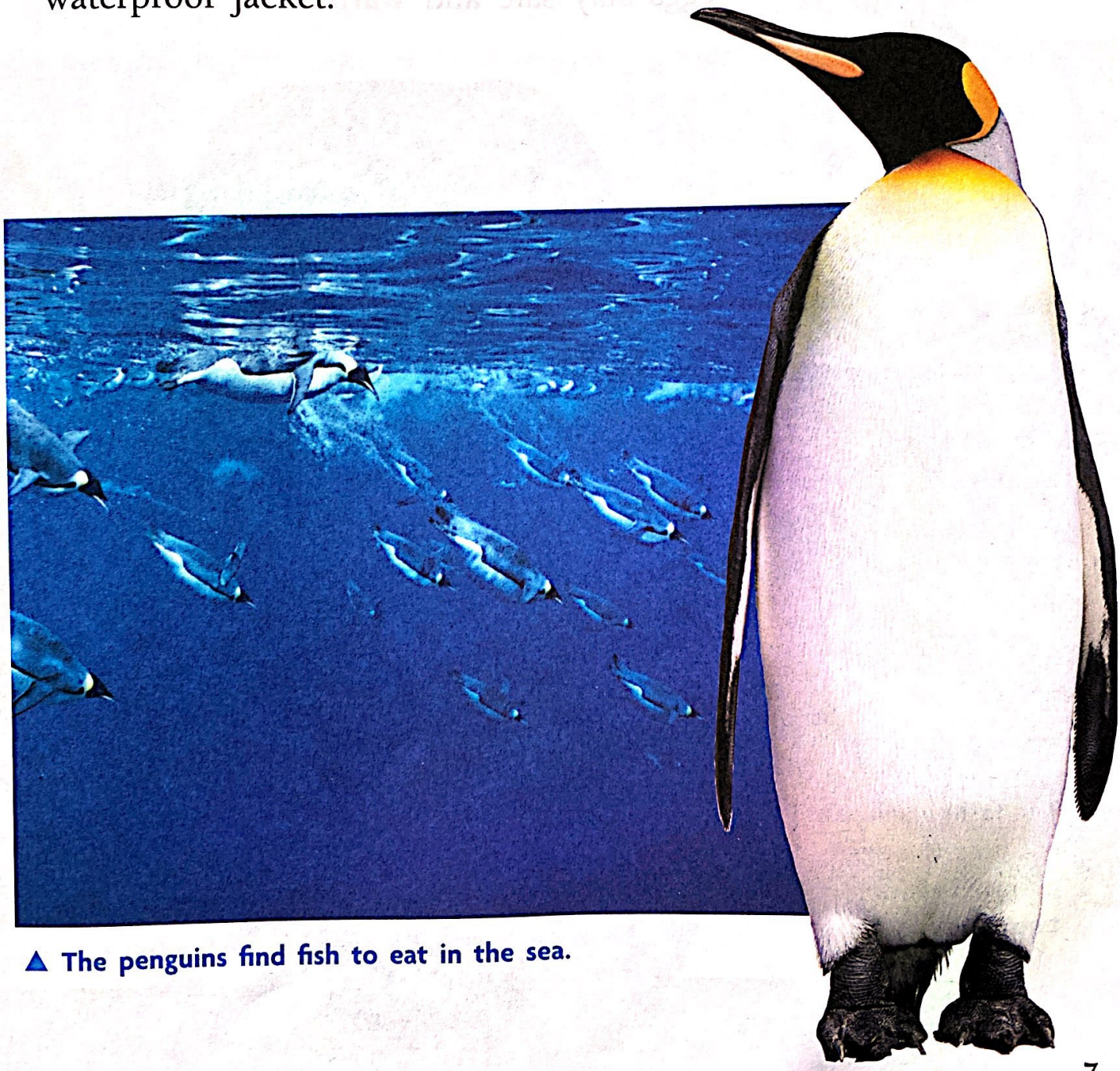
Notes

2 Meet the emperor penguin! These barrel-shaped birds can't fly. They are too heavy and their wings are too short. They can't walk too well, either. These penguins spend most of their lives in the freezing-cold sea. A thick layer of blubber, or fat, and shiny feathers act like a heavy, waterproof jacket.



▲ The penguins find fish to eat in the sea.

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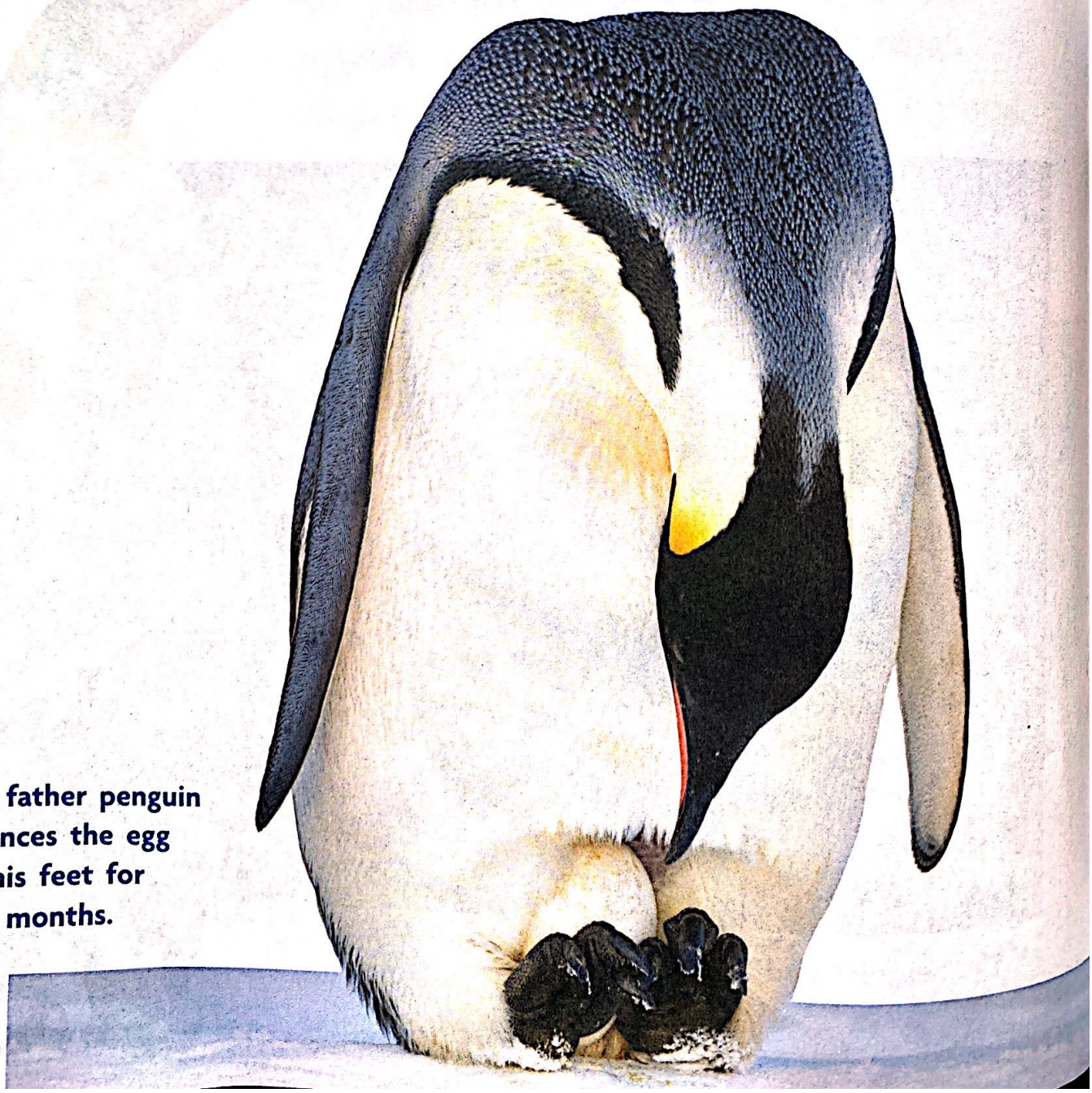
Notes

3 All the penguins waddle across the ice when it's time to lay eggs. Each mother lays one egg and then waddles back to the sea to eat. Who will keep those fragile eggs from breaking or freezing? The fathers wiggle the eggs onto their feet, right under their bellies. There the eggs stay safe and warm.



▶ **The father penguin balances the egg on his feet for two months.**

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Notes

4 The wind is freezing cold. All the fathers huddle together to keep each other warm. Then one day, *tap, tap, crack!* The eggs hatch. The mothers come back to feed and care for their chicks. Now it's the fathers' turn to eat. Soon the penguin families will return to the sea again.

▲ **The fathers take turns standing on the inside of the huddle, out of the wind.**

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Short Read 2

Remember to annotate as you read.

Notes

Postcards from Alex

1 "Are you sure you want to leave the rain forest?" asked Juan. "The Amazon is the greatest rain forest in the world!"

2 "It's always damp from the rain and too warm!" said Alex.

3 "But we have delicious insects here!" cried Juan.

4 "I'll find tasty bugs to eat elsewhere," Alex said. "And I'll send postcards to let you know where I am."

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Notes

Dear Juan,

I am in Chile. A llama named Larry gave me a ride up a mountain. There's grass for me to burrow in, and the bugs are tasty. But it's too cold here. Larry's fur coat keeps him warm, but I'm freezing. This is not a good home for me. I'm leaving!

Your chilly pal,
Alex

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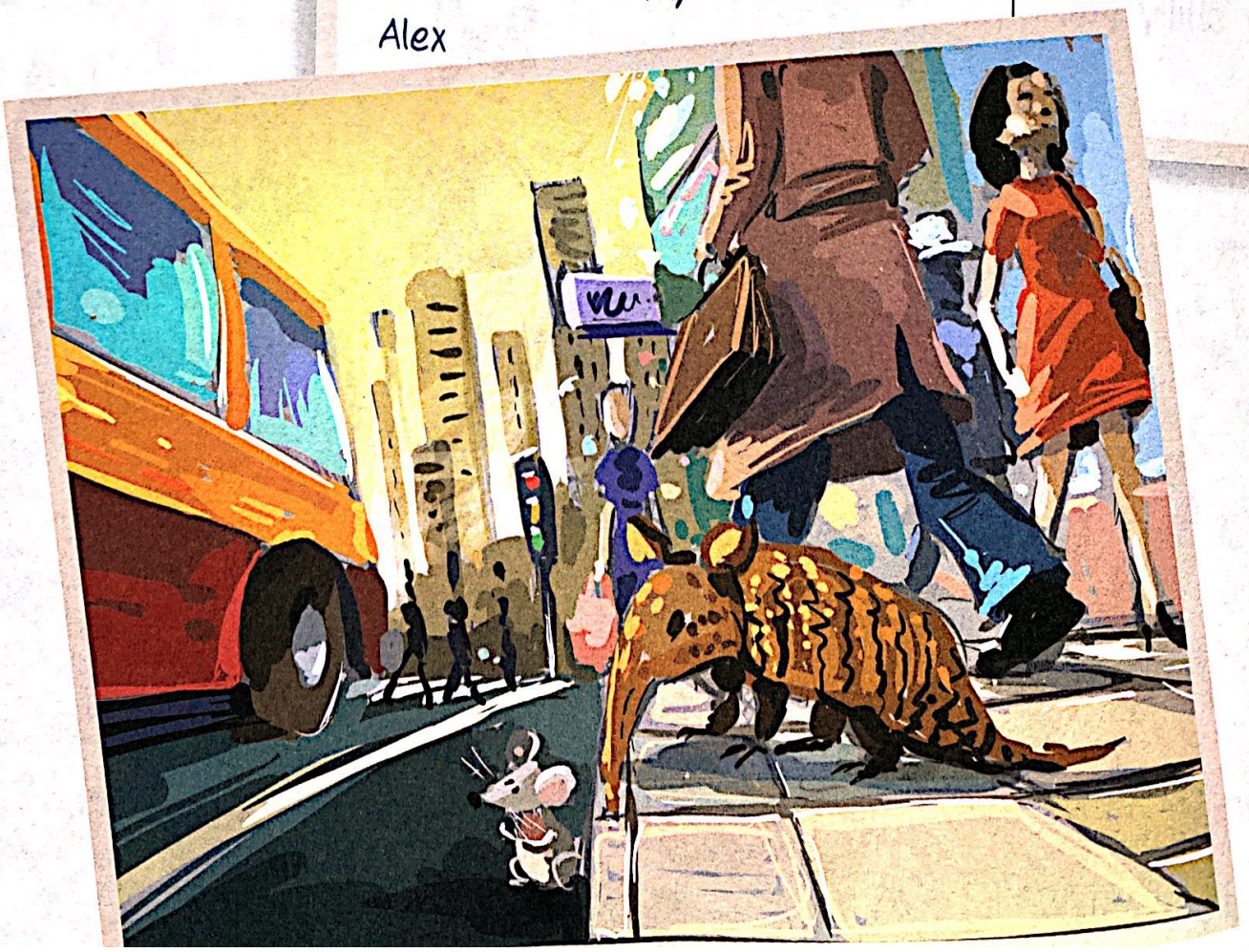
Notes

Dear Juan,

Here I am in the city! A mouse named Miguel showed me his favorite places to eat. He likes garbage, but I've found some fleas and spiders. The problem is there's nowhere for me to sleep, because I can't dig a burrow. Even my big claws can't break these sidewalks. Good-bye, city!

Your tired friend,
Alex



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Dear Juan,

I swam across a river yesterday. No problem! I did my doggie paddle and walked on the bottom. Now I'm back on land in the desert. It's so hot and dry, I can't find a drop of water. There isn't even an ant to eat.

The rain forest is best for me! I'm coming home!

Alex

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The Deserts of Utah

1 Utah is a big state. It has many different land areas, or habitats. It has forests. It has wetlands. And it has deserts. A desert can be a hard place for a plant or an animal to live.

2 One animal that lives in the Utah desert is the jackrabbit. It has unusual ears. They are huge for an animal its size. The jackrabbit uses its ears to stay cool. The ears have big blood vessels. They carry heat to the jackrabbit's skin and then into the air.

3 The beautiful leopard lizard also lives in the Utah desert. It has long legs and toes. It uses them to lift itself off the ground to stay cool. If a bird is around, you might have to rescue this lizard. Birds like to find and eat them.

4 How does a plant live in the desert? The cactus might be the most unusual desert plant. It has sharp needles on it. They keep animals away. The cactus stores water in its stems and roots. The roots are only a few inches below ground. This helps the cactus get the water it needs to live.

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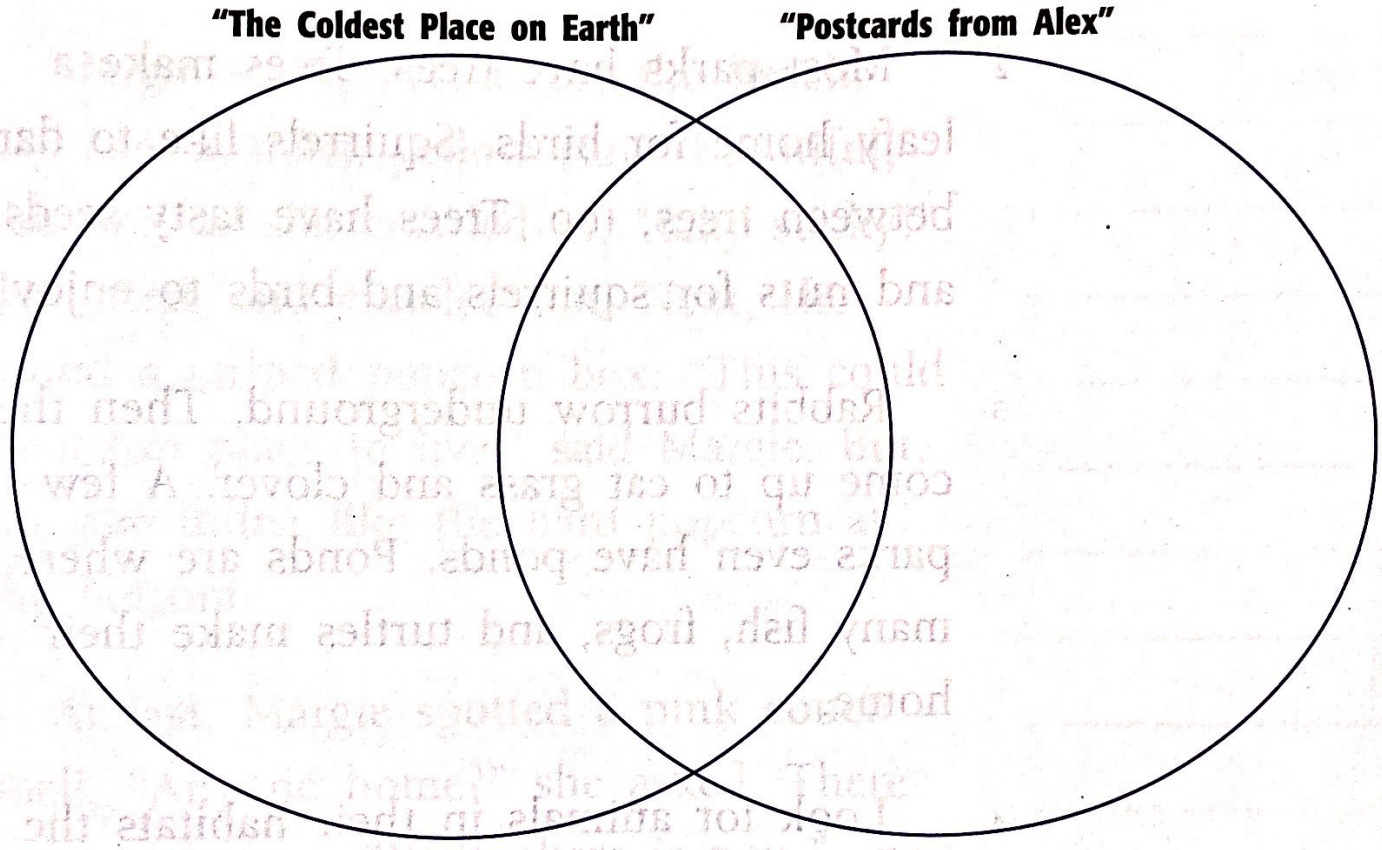
BuildReflectWrite

Build Knowledge

Compare and contrast "The Coldest Place on Earth" and "Postcards from Alex." Use a Venn diagram to identify how the habitats described in these texts are similar and different.



Reflect

How do living things get what they need to survive?

Based on this week's texts, write new ideas and questions you have about the essential question.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Write to Sources

Narrative

After reading "Postcards from Alex," imagine you are an armadillo and live in the rain forest. Write a journal entry describing how living in the rain forest meets your needs. Your narrative should use facts and details you have learned from the reading selection.

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Remember to annotate as you read.

Notes

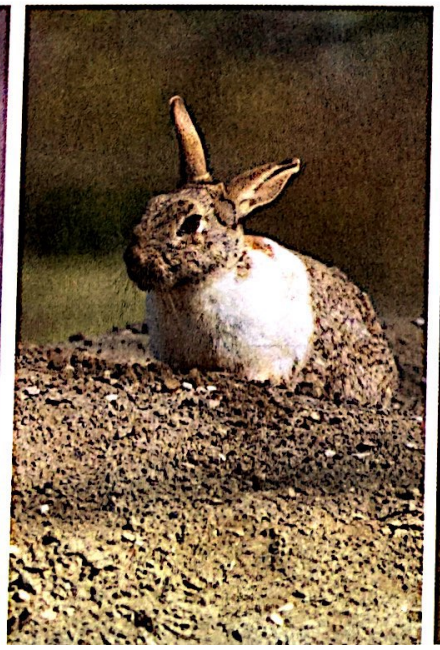
A City Park Habitat

1 Did you know that a city park can be an animal habitat? A habitat is a special place where animals live.

2 Most parks have trees. Trees make a leafy home for birds. Squirrels like to dart between trees, too. Trees have tasty seeds and nuts for squirrels and birds to enjoy!

3 Rabbits burrow underground. Then they come up to eat grass and clover. A few parks even have ponds. Ponds are where many fish, frogs, and turtles make their home.

4 Look for animals in their habitats the next time you visit a city park!



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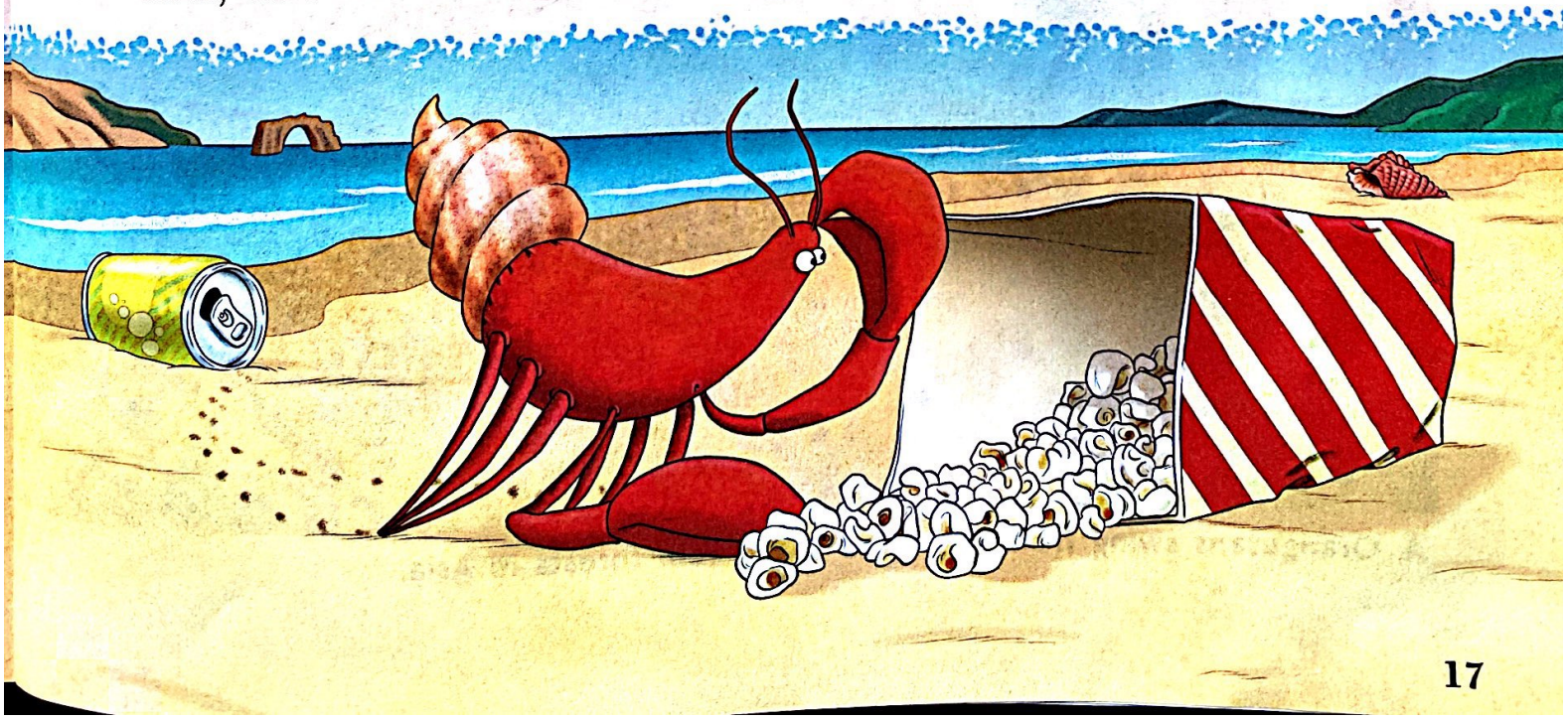
Notes

A New Home for Margie

1 "This won't do!" cried Margie the hermit crab. "My old shell is simply too small. I must find a new home to live in."

2 Margie scampered across the beach. She saw a shiny, yellow can. "Beautiful," she said as she crawled in. "Icky sticky!" she cried, and crawled out. Next, she found a striped popcorn box. "This could be a fun place to live," said Margie. But, no, she didn't like the hard popcorn at the bottom.

3 At last, Margie spotted a pink conch shell. "Anyone home?" she asked. There was no answer. "Well, there is now," she said, and crawled into her new home.



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Extended Read 1

Remember to annotate as you read.

Notes

Habitats Around the World

by Thea Feldman

Introduction

1 A habitat is a place where plants and animals live in nature. There are different kinds of habitats around the world. Some habitats are flat places with a lot of grass. Some habitats are always cold. Some get a lot of rain. Some habitats are even under the water!

2 Different animals and plants live in different habitats. Let's explore a few habitats.

▲ Orangutans swing from the trees in the rain forests in Asia.

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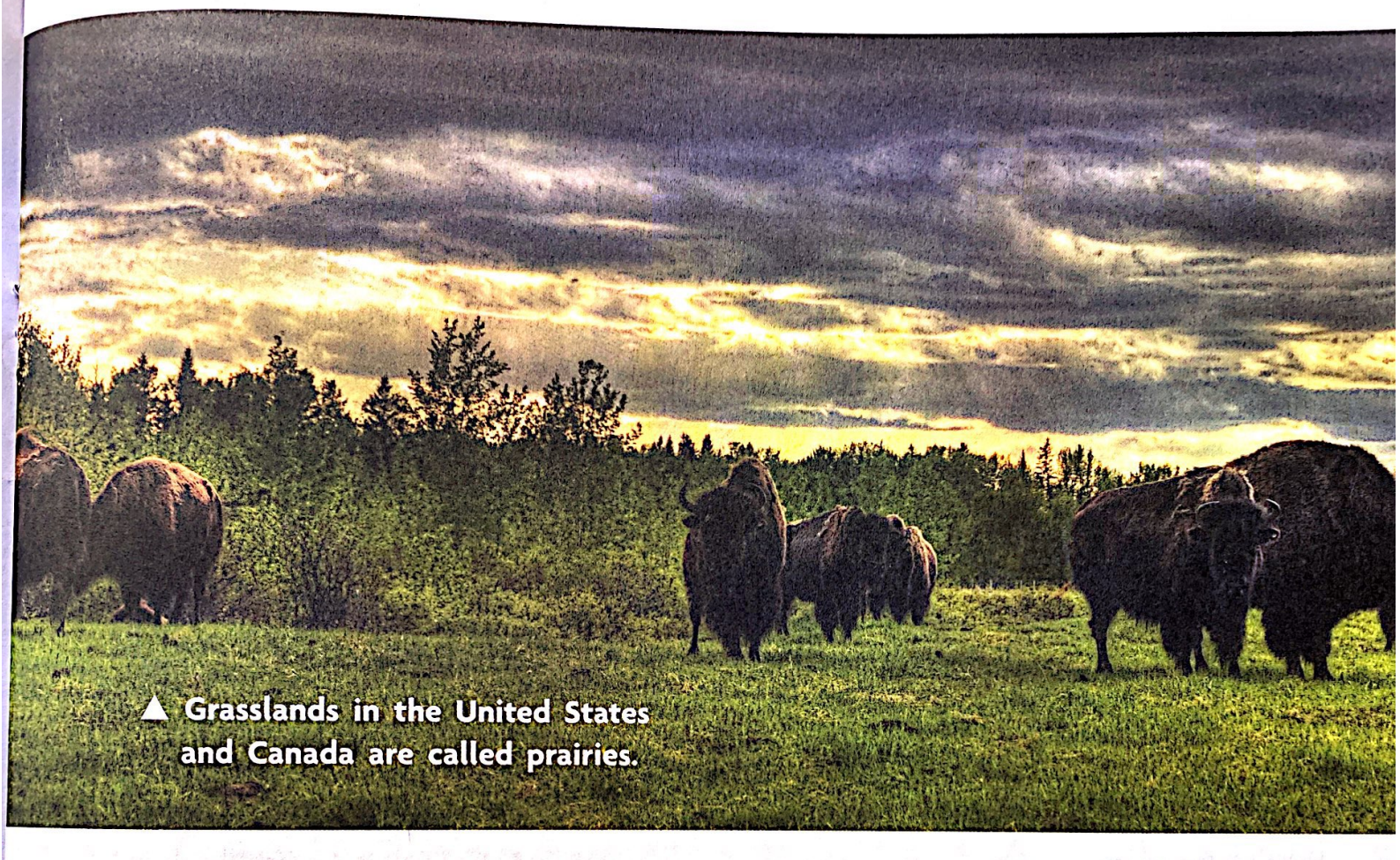

▲ Grasslands in the United States and Canada are called prairies.

Notes

Welcome to the Grasslands!

3 A grassland is one kind of habitat. Grasslands are found all over the world. Only the South Pole does not have one.

4 Grasslands are what they sound like. They are lands covered with grass! Many other plants and flowers live there too, but only a few bushes and trees. Most grasslands are flat. They cover thousands of miles.

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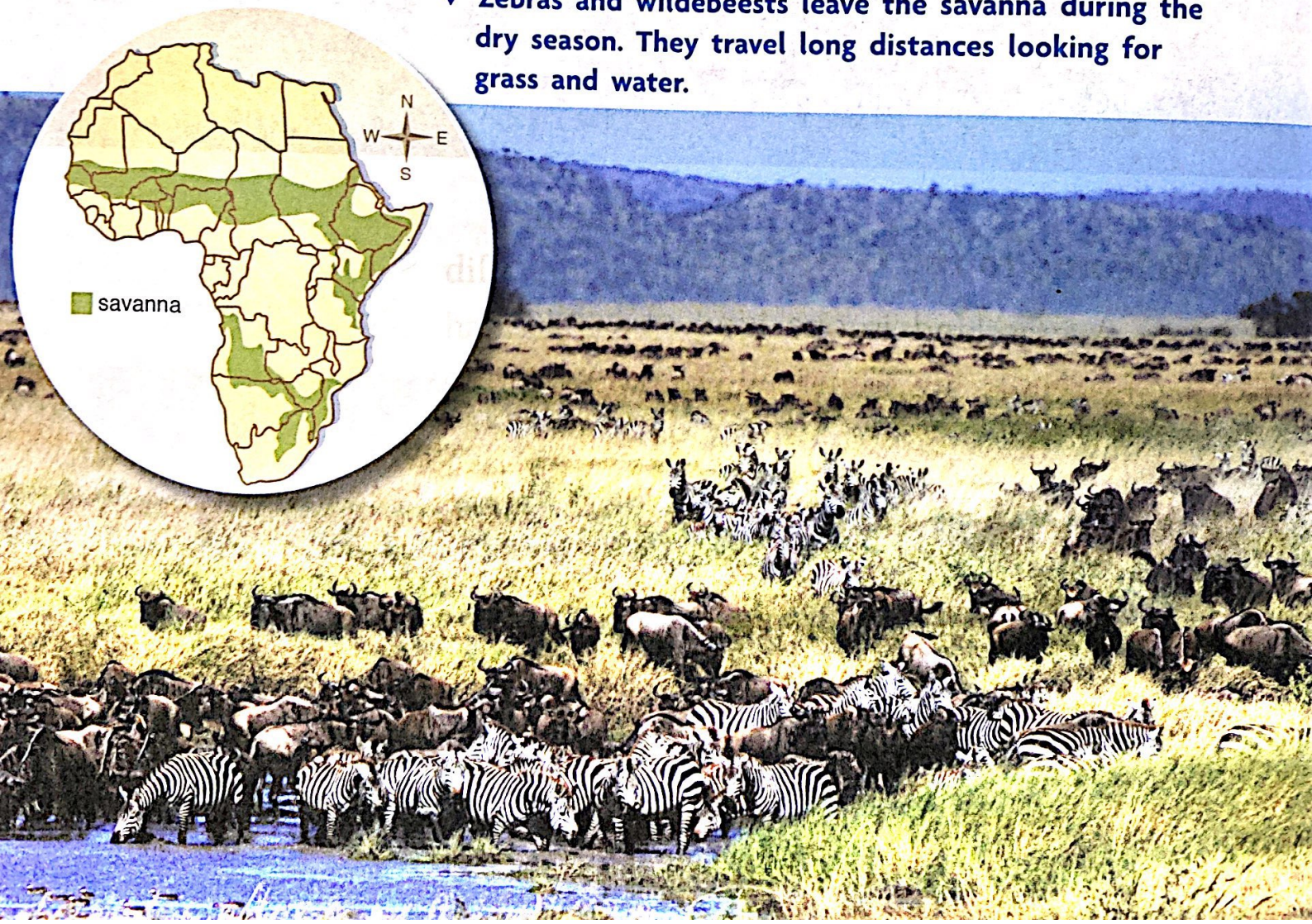
Notes

5 Grasslands in Africa are called savannas. A savanna has a long, hot dry season. Animals leave home each year during this season. They leave to find food and water. A rainy season starts after the dry season ends. The animals go back home after the rainy season. The rains allow new grass to grow. The animals eat the new grass. There is also rainwater to drink.

▼ **Zebras and wildebeests leave the savanna during the dry season. They travel long distances looking for grass and water.**



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◀ Polar bears have a thick layer of fat called blubber to keep them warm. They have thick fur, too. Their paws are big and wide. That helps them walk on snow and ice.

Welcome to the Tundra!

6 The tundra is a habitat that gets very cold. The world's tundras are all located near or at the North and South Poles. Those are the two coldest places on Earth.

7 The largest tundra is called the Arctic tundra. It is near the North Pole. The Arctic tundra covers nearly 14 percent of all land on Earth. The temperature can be as cold as –34° Celsius (–29° Fahrenheit) in winter. The Arctic has a short summer. Temperatures can rise then to about 18°C (64°F).

Notes

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8 In the winter, even the ground freezes! In the summer, the top layer of soil thaws out. Then plants and flowers grow. Polar bears, foxes, seals, and oxen all live on the Arctic tundra.

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monkey

macaw

jaguar

Welcome to the Rain Forest!

9 Nearly one-third of the planet is covered in forest habitats. There are many different kinds of forests. A tropical rain forest is hot and rainy. The temperature averages about 23°C (73°F). A lot of rain falls. A tropical rain forest can have up to 1,016 centimeters (400 inches) of rain in a year! Trees and other plants stay green all year long.

Notes

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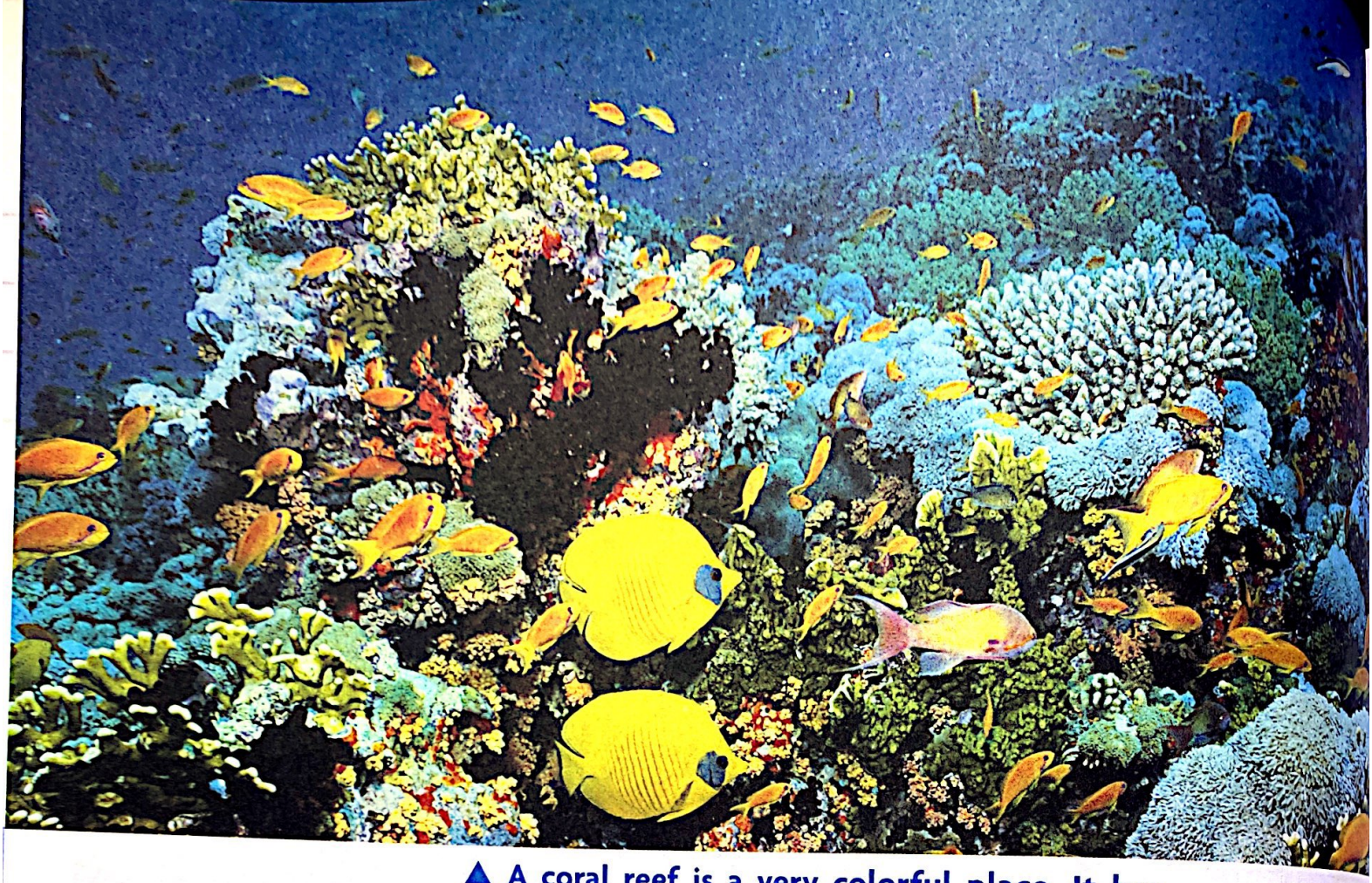

▲ A coral reef is a very colorful place. It has been called the "jewel box of the sea"!

Notes

Welcome to the Coral Reef!

10 A coral reef is a place in the ocean. It looks like a rock, but it is not. A coral reef is made of coral, a very tiny animal. Hundreds of thousands of corals come together and form a reef. Hundreds of other kinds of animals live at a coral reef. Many sea plants live there, too. Coral reefs are found in warm, shallow water.

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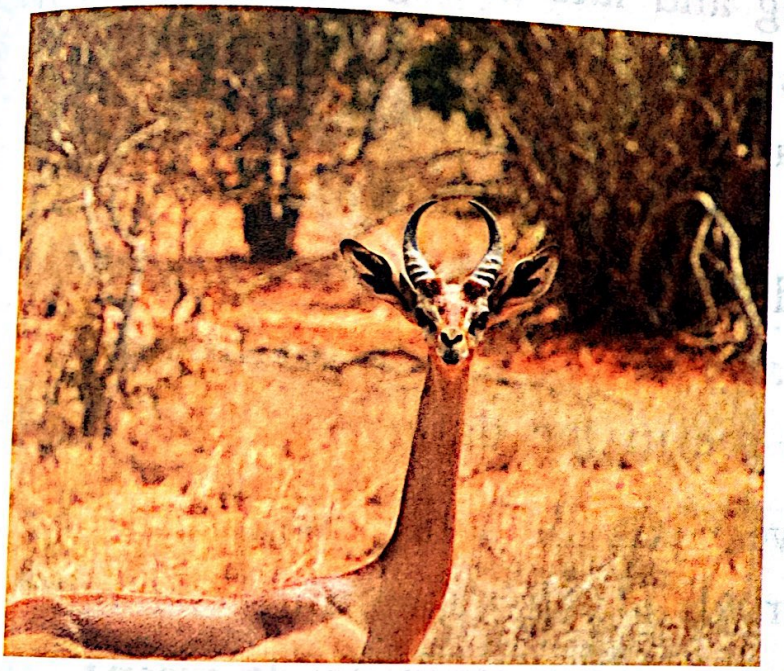
Conclusion

11 You've just visited four habitats. Make a list of what you like about each one. Make a list of what you don't like about each one. Is there one habitat you like best? Would you like to live there? Why?



grasslands

rain forest

tundra

coral reef

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An Ocean Visit

1 Every year in March, my family goes to the beach for a week. It is so different from the farm where we live. My mom and I like to take walks early in the morning and late at night. We collect the many-colored, small stones we find on the beach. The stones are smooth and round. We keep them in a jar at home. Once we even found a starfish. But we didn't touch it or move it. We never do that. We also don't walk far at night because it's hard to see in the dark.

2 One afternoon we went for a big swim. All of a sudden my dad started to yell, "Get out! Get out!" He spotted a shark swimming near us. It wasn't large, but its teeth were sharp and pointed. Little fish were darting all around it. They make a good meal for a hungry shark. Not us!

3 "As long as sharks have lots of food, they won't harm us," said Dad. "But it's better to stay on the beach for now." We thought that was a smart idea!

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BuildReflectWrite

Build Knowledge

Based on your reading of "Habitats Around the World," identify the key details of each habitat.

Habitat	Key Details
Grasslands	
Tundra	
Rain Forest	
Coral Reef	

Reflect

How do living things get what they need to survive?

Based on this week's texts, write new ideas and questions you have about the essential question.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Write to Sources

Informative/Explanatory

Drawing from "Habitats Around the World," write a short essay that explains why different animals and plants live in different habitats. Use facts and details from the reading selection as the basis for your explanation.

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Shared Reads 5 & 6

Remember to annotate as you read.

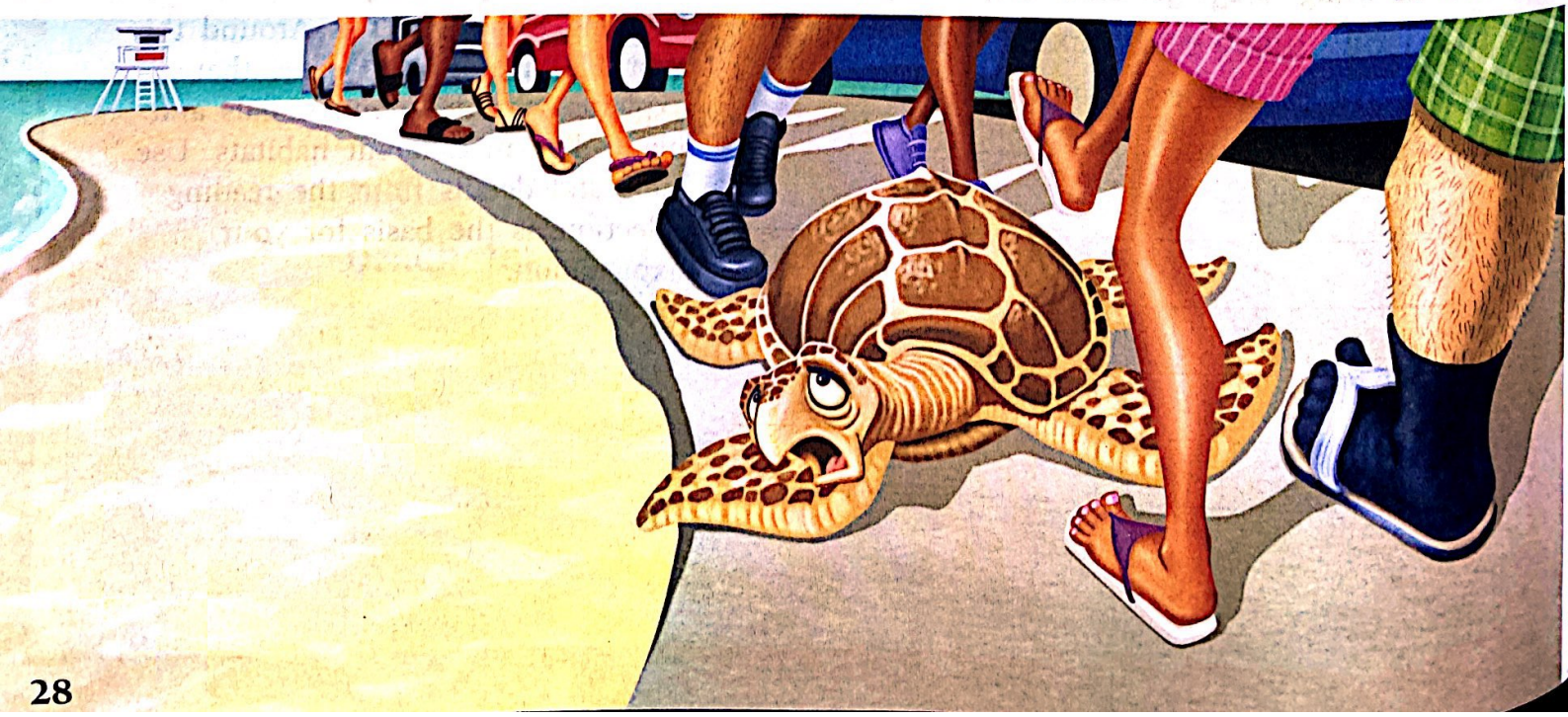
Notes

Burt the Sea Turtle

1 Burt the Sea Turtle lived in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean. He had hatched from an egg his mother laid in the sand. Once hatched, he waddled down to the sea and began to swim.

2 Almost eighty years later, Burt had still never been away from home. He wanted to learn about life outside the ocean.

3 One day he crawled out of the sea and soon found himself on a hard sidewalk. People stepped over him. Cars rushed by. "I've seen enough!" Burt cried and hurried home. He had learned that the sea was the best place for him.



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Notes

The Monarchs' Journey

1 The bright orange and black of a monarch butterfly is exciting to see. But to a predator, such as a bird, the bright colors are a warning. "Keep away! This butterfly is poisonous to eat!"

2 The butterflies are found in North America. Each fall an amazing thing happens. These colorful insects take flight from Canada and the northern United States. They fly thousands of miles south to the same trees in Mexico. How do they know the way? Scientists cannot explain it. Their journey is one of nature's mysteries.

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Extended Read 2

Remember to annotate as you read.

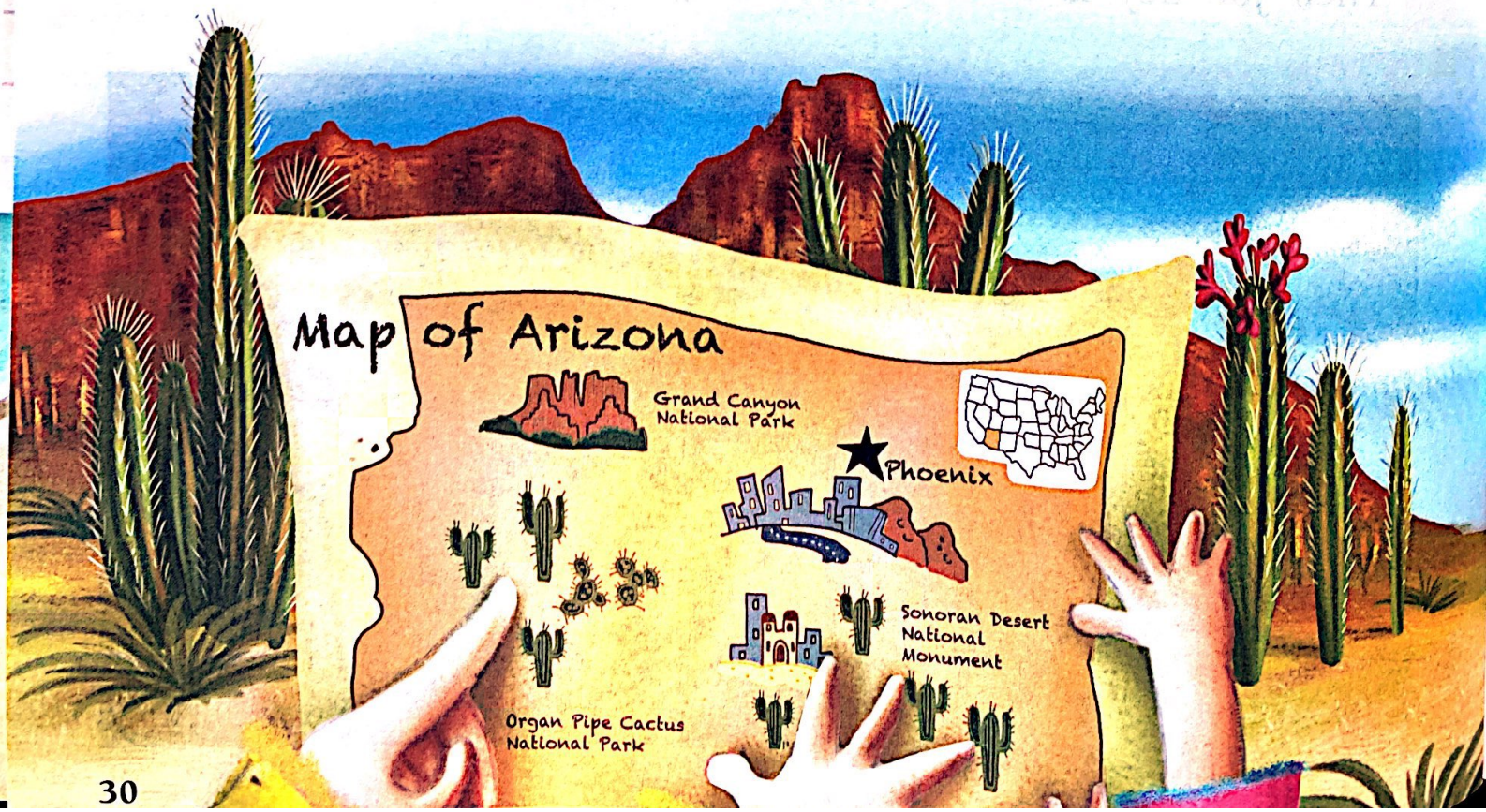
Notes

Lost in the Desert

by Thea Feldman

1 Kara looked out the car window. She saw a lot of brown earth. She saw many cactuses and some grass. She saw the blue sky and the empty road. She did not see much else.

2 "Where are we again?" she asked her parents. Her mom showed Kara the map. "We're in the Sonoran Desert, in Arizona—on our way to see the organ pipe cactuses in bloom."



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Notes

3 "Oh yeah," said Kara, as the car slowed to a stop. "The Sonoran Desert. Or, in Fred's case, the Snoring Desert!" Kara looked over at the family cat napping on the seat next to her. "Looks like he'll sleep through the entire vacation!" said Kara.

4 Kara and her parents got out of the air-conditioned car. They saw many tall cactuses with big flowers.

5 "I'm glad we came early, before it gets even hotter," said Kara's mother. "It's sure to be another 100-degree day." She opened the car door to grab her camera. "And I doubt it will rain. Like all deserts, the Sonoran Desert gets less than 10 inches of rain a year."

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Notes

6 At the same time, in the cool car, Fred woke up. He felt the warm air outside and liked the way it felt. Right before Kara's mom closed the door again, he slipped outside. Kara's mother did not notice. Neither did Kara nor her dad.

7 Kara's mother took photos of pipe organ cactuses. Kara and her father strolled around. On the other side of the car, Fred stretched. The hot sun felt good. Suddenly, a kangaroo rat dashed right in front of Fred and ran into the brush. Fred did not know what kind of rat it was. But he was sure it was the kind that needed to be chased.

8 So he chased it. Just when Fred thought he might catch the rat, it disappeared into a hole in the ground! Fred peered into the hole. The rat was gone.

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Notes

9 Fred looked around. He did not see the car. He did not see Kara or her parents. He saw a lot of brown earth. He saw many cactuses and very little grass. He saw the blue sky. He did not see much else.

10 Fred felt the heat on his back and on his paws, too. The ground was so hot! The heat no longer felt good. Fred heard three car doors slam. He ran toward the sound. Fred got to the road and saw the car leaving without him. His family must have thought he was still inside!

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Notes

11 Fred meowed and ran after the car, but it was going too fast. Fred had to stop. He was thirsty now. He did not see a single drop of water. How did the plants get water? What did the animals drink? Fred did not know that desert plants trap and store rainwater to drink during dry seasons. He did not know that desert animals get water from the food they eat. He just knew he was thirsty.

12 The desert was quiet. *Where are the animals?* Fred wondered. He did not know that most desert animals rest underground or in the shade during the day. He just knew he needed to get out of the sun. He saw some rocky hills and walked toward them, hoping he would find shade there.

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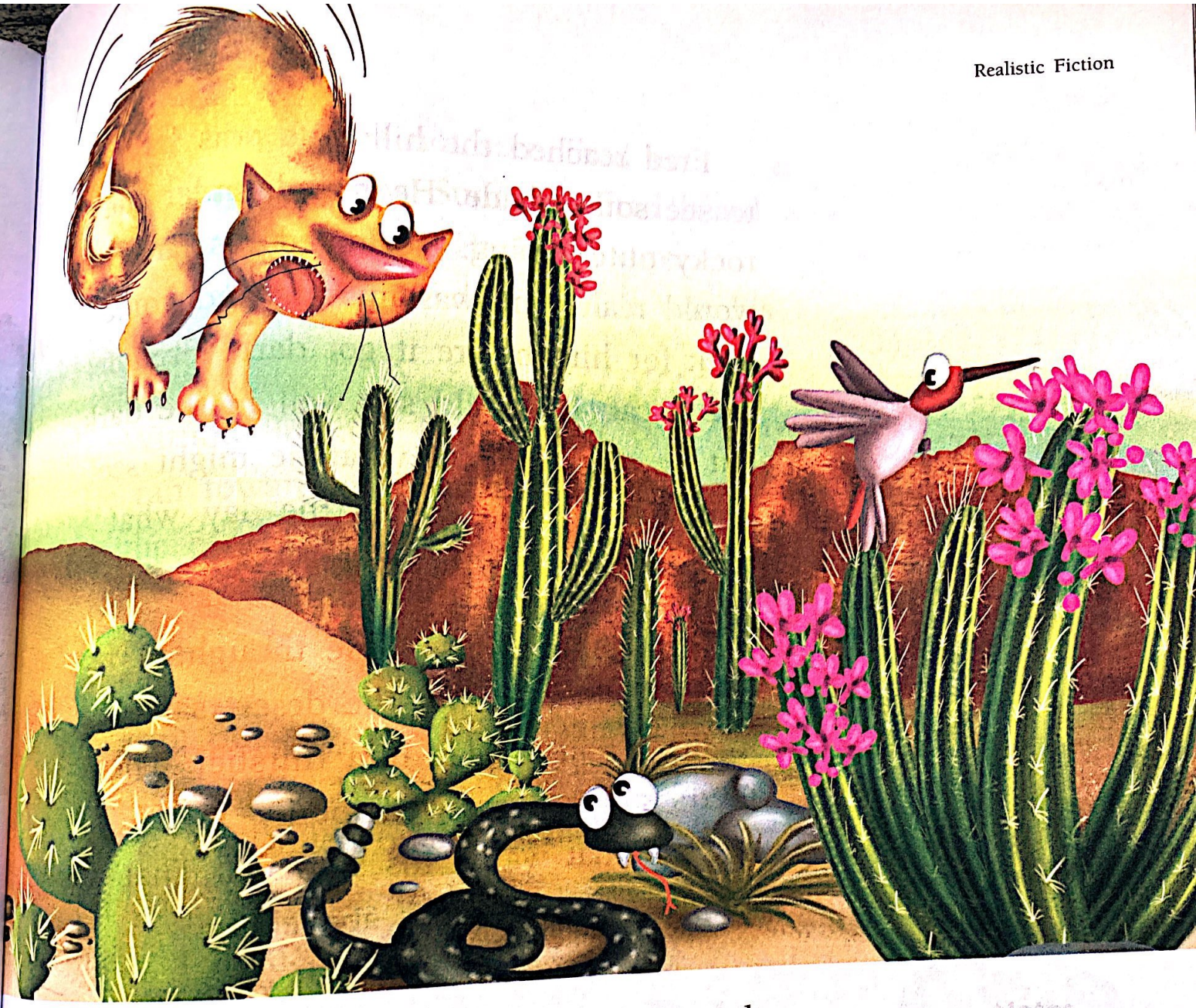

13 A sidewinder moved quickly across the sand. It was coming toward Fred. *Snake!* he thought. Fred did not know much about snakes. He hoped they did not eat cats. The sidewinder passed by him. Fred ran away.

14 *Whew!* thought Fred. Then he realized he was hungry now, too. What can a house cat eat in the desert?

Notes

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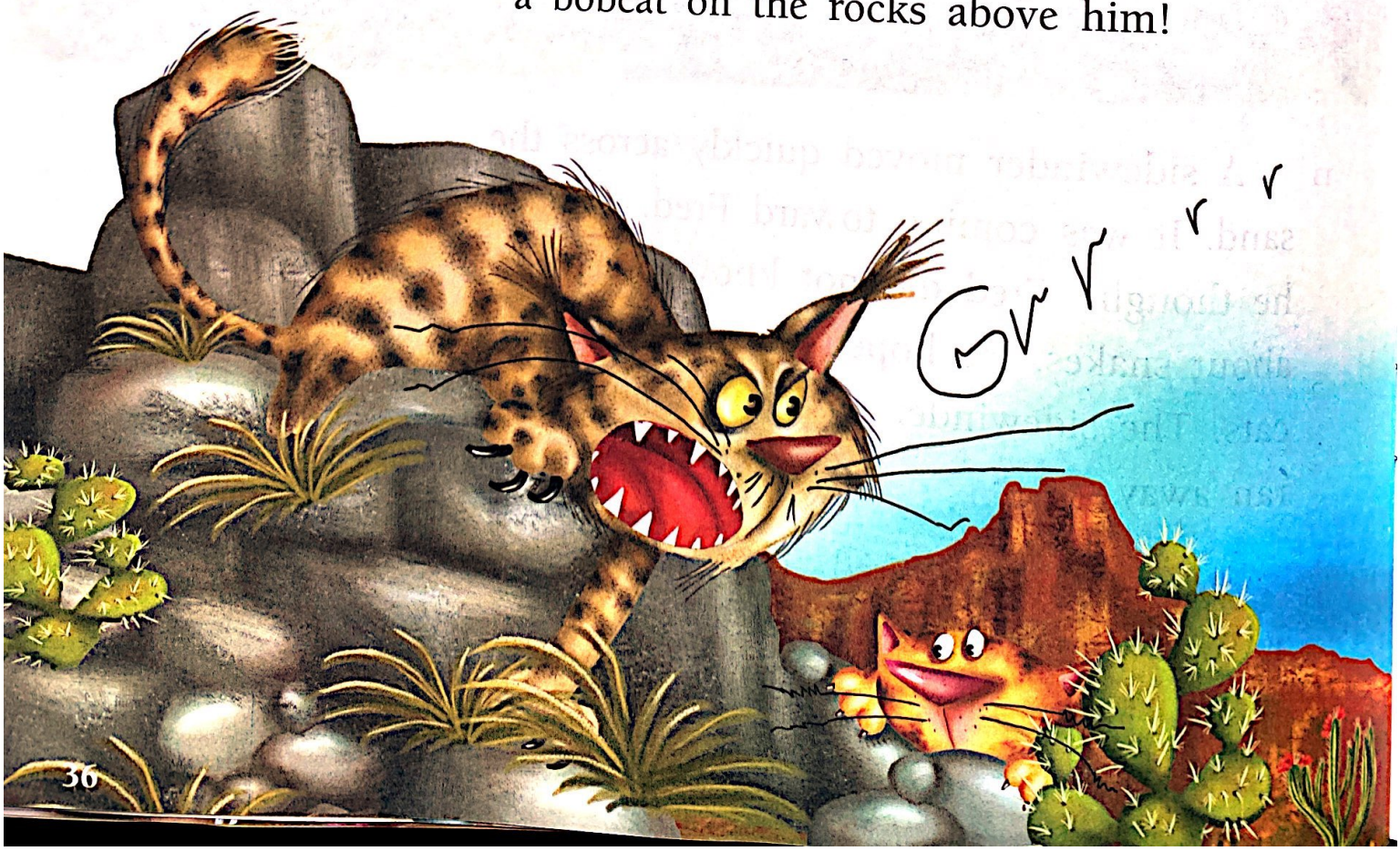
Notes

15 Fred reached the hills and was happy to see some shade. He rested under the rocky outcropping. He hoped his family would realize he was missing and come back for him before it got dark. Fred was a cat. He could see well in the dark, but he was afraid of what he might see! If it was so quiet during the day, what happened during the night?

16 Fred licked himself. He thought it would calm him, but the desert sand in his fur just made him thirstier. Then Fred's stomach growled loudly. Fred realized that wasn't his stomach. That was a bobcat on the rocks above him!



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17 The bobcat had not seen Fred yet. Fred froze in terror. Suddenly Fred heard three car doors slam. He heard three voices call, "Fred! Fred! Fred!" It was his family!

18 Without looking behind him, Fred fled. He ran toward the sounds. When he got to the car, he scrambled into the backseat. Three car doors slammed again and the car drove off.

19 Kara put a bowl of water and a dish of cat food on the car floor. "Silly Fred," she said. "Don't you know that a house cat doesn't belong in the desert?!" *Yes,* thought Fred. *Yes, I do.*

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Kurt's Big Trip

1 Last summer, Kurt and his dad went to Florida. It was their third time. They were going on a big trip. Kurt put on his favorite shirt. It had a bird on it. A big turkey. But turkeys weren't what they wanted to see in Florida. They wanted to see fish. "Don't fall in the water," said Kurt's mom as they got on the plane. "And don't get hurt!"

2 When they got to Florida, Kurt's dad rented a boat. His dad turned on the engine and they took off. The boat stirred up the water behind them. "Stop!" said Kurt. He pointed to a beautiful fish with long spines. "Look what I found!"

3 "Oh no," said Kurt's dad. "That's a lionfish. Stay away from it. Its spines can sting you! People bought these fish for their aquariums. But when the fish got big, they dumped them here. It's changed this habitat, but not for the better. The lionfish have no animals that want to eat them—so there are too many of them. Now they are eating all the other plants and animals. We can't fish here."

4 "Yikes," said Kurt. "This is a fishing trip I'll never forget."

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BuildReflectWrite

Build Knowledge

Summarize the key events in the story "Lost in the Desert."

Lost in the Desert		
Can you explain how being lost in the desert affected Fred?	**How would you describe the sequence of events in this story?**	**Can you explain the reason Fred left the car?**

Reflect

How do living things get what they need to survive?

Based on this week's texts, write new ideas and questions you have about the essential question.

_____

_____

_____

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_____

Write to Sources

Opinion

After reading "Lost in the Desert," do you think Fred could have survived in the desert if his family had not come back for him? In a short essay, state your opinion and provide one or more reasons to support it. Use evidence from the text to support your opinion and reasons.

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Support for Collabo

Discussion Prompts

Share a new idea or opinion . . .

I think that _____.

I notice that _____.

My opinion is _____.

An important event was when _____.

Gain the floor . . .

I would like to add _____.

Excuse me for interrupting, but _____.

That made me think of _____.

Build on a peer's idea or opinion . . .

I also think that _____.

In addition, _____.

Another idea is _____.

Express agreement with a peer's idea . . .

I agree with [Name] because _____.

I agree that _____.

I think that is important because _____.

Respectfully express disagreement . . .

I disagree with [Name] because _____.

I understand your point of view, but I think _____.

Have you considered that _____?

Ask a clarifying question . . .

What did you mean when you said _____?

Are you saying that _____?

Can you explain what you mean by _____?

Clarify for others . . .

I meant that _____.

I am trying to say that _____.

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