

MeTEOR Performance Task

Sixth Grade

English Language Arts
Wild Things



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MeTEOR
CONNECTING THE DOTS

Performance Task Item: Wild Things

Grade Level: 6th Grade

Focus Areas: Informational Text; Research; Problem Solving

Essential Question: What roles and responsibilities do zoos and humans have in helping wild animals?

Learning Targets:

- Students will use text evidence to make inferences.
- Students will determine the central idea of a text and provide an objective summary.
- Students will determine author's purpose using different texts addressing the same topic.
- Students will use the text to synthesize and infer general information on the topic.
- Students will look at three different texts to garner information to solve a problem.

STANDARDS

Content Standards:

- Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.
- Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another

Materials/Resources:

- "What's Best for Elephants" www.achieve3000.org Lexile 1080
- "What a Zoo" www.achieve3000.org Lexile 1080
- "Zoo Animals: Living Long, Living Well" News: Animals in Action www.achieve3000.org Lexile 880

Vocabulary:

- Counterparts
- Survival
- Habitats
- Activists
- Replicate
- Beneficiaries
- Symptoms
- Modified habitats
- Aging
- Protected
- Climate
- Terrain

4. What is the author's purpose for writing this article? What point do you believe the author would like you to understand? (DOK 2)

Part B:

Read "What a Zoo" and answer questions 5 - 7.

5. According to the article, how did the zoo get the lions to stay by the windows? (DOK 1)

6. What are some important reasons that this zoo is able to closely resemble these animals' natural habitat? Would this zoo model be able to happen in other locations or climates? Why or why not? (DOK 2)

7. What is the author's purpose for writing this article? What point do you believe the author would like you to understand? (DOK 2)

Read “Zoo Animals: Living Long, Living Well” and answer question 8 – 11.

8. According to the article, what are some of the health issues the animals are having? (DOK 1)

9. What is a “modified habitat”? Using text evidence, write the definition and give examples based on the information in the article. (DOK 2/3)

10. What reasons are given in this article for the animals living longer in zoos than in the wild? The article “What’s best for Elephants” states that animals live longer in the wild. Why do you think the articles do not agree? List the reasons and evidence behind each article’s point of view. (DOK 2/3)

11. What is the author’s purpose for writing this article? What point do you believe the author would like you to understand? (DOK 2)

Part C:

12. Zoos must make money to be able to operate and take care of animals. In “What a Zoo” and “Zoo Animals: Living Long, Living Well”, some of the answers to the problems shown in “What’s best for Elephants?” were answered. The San Diego Wild Animal Park is one of the best for animals as well as visitors. As a group, research at least three other zoos in different parts of the country that have a more traditional zoo setup. Decide as a group what improvements could realistically be made to help move the more traditional zoo set up to a better environment for the animals and visitors. With your partner or a group, decide on a campaign to raise money to improve your local zoo and develop a poster that answers the following:

- Make a list of what improvements must be made and prioritize them.
- Give details of your fundraising campaign. (for example: what activity, time frame, best people to contact)
- What roles will each person in the group be in charge of and what are their responsibilities?
- Explain why the improvements are necessary for both the visitors and animals.

Make a poster promoting your “event”. Be sure to include all of the above information in your poster. (DOK 3/4)

13. ***Do you believe that zoos are necessary anymore?*** The internet gives us immediate information and allows us to see the world without ever leaving our chair, home or state. Could virtual zoos provide the same experience? What are the things that might be missed from not being able to visit a zoo? Why are they necessary from the point of view of the animals as well as the visitors? Research zoos and zoo alternatives. Answer the question, “Do you believe that zoos are necessary anymore?” and give three reasons for your opinion based on your research. (DOK 3)

14. The three articles you have read all discuss the same topic. The authors looked at the topic from a different point of view but one thing they all have in common is wanting animals to be healthy and safe. Animal Rescue Organizations are very important to helping injured animals. Many zoos are good about helping take in animals from rescue organizations who may have special needs or would be in danger out in the wild. Write an article for the local newspaper on whether you believe zoos are necessary and what roles and responsibilities zoos and humans have in helping wild animals. Be sure to use your research notes from questions 12 and 13. (DOK 3)

ARTICLES/STUDENT MATERIALS/RUBRICS

“What’s Best for Elephants”

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Achieve3000, January 14, 2009).

Zoo elephants don't live as long as elephants in the wild, a new study says. Scientists compared the average life spans of Asian and African elephants in European zoos with the life spans of those living in the wild or working for humans in Asia and Africa. They found that the wild or working animals lived at least twice as long as their relatives in zoos.

The study compared the life spans of Asian elephants living in European zoos with the life spans of Asian elephants working in the Myanmar Timber Enterprise. (Myanmar is the Asian country formerly known as Burma.) Researchers found that the median life span for the zoo elephants was 18.9 years. In other words, half of the elephants died younger than that age and half lived longer than 18.9 years. The median life span for the elephants working in the timber industry was 41.7 years.

The study also looked at the life spans of African elephants living in European zoos. Those were compared with the life spans of African elephants living in a wildlife reserve in Kenya. The median life span for the zoo elephants was 16.9 years. The median life span for elephants in the reserve was 56 years.

Why would zoo elephants have shorter life spans than their wild [counterparts](#)? Georgia J. Mason, one of the study's authors, speculated on possible reasons for this. She noted that it is difficult for zoos to [reproduce](#) the elephants' natural habitats. Zoos usually lack the large grazing areas that wild elephants are used to. In addition, zoo animals often are alone or with one or two other unrelated animals. In the wild, they tend to live in related groups of 8 to 12 animals. Some animal rights [activists](#) have asked zoos to stop keeping elephants for these reasons.

Some people believe Mason shouldn't criticize zoos. Steven Feldman, with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, believes this. He pointed out that the report did not study North American zoos. Some U.S. zoos have more space for their elephants. Feldman also said it is hard to compare conditions in zoos and in the wild. "Every event in a zoo is observed," Feldman said. Only a small number of events in nature can be observed.

Paul Boyle, also with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, says Mason's study was unfair. The study used zoo data going back to 1960. Zoo conditions have improved dramatically since then. Zoo officials know more about animal behavior, diets, and medical needs.

Critics also say that the two non-zoo populations Mason studied are special. One group lives in an animal reserve where there are laws against hunting. The other lives at a timber company with handlers to care for them. Elephants outside these protected areas face threats to their [survival](#). They are hunted and their habitat is being destroyed. These factors affect their life spans. There are only about 30,000 Asian elephants in the wild. Twenty-five years ago there was about 200,000. The number of African elephants is also declining. It could be argued that some wild elephants would be better off in zoos.

Mason acknowledges that the life spans of zoo elephants have improved. But she still believes that protected wild and working elephants are better off than zoo elephants. Mason says zoos need to figure out how their elephants can live long and healthy lives.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.



“WHAT A ZOO!”

SAN DIEGO, California (Achieve3000, March 12, 2007).

The cheetah's paws hit the ground like muffled thunder as the animal shot across the landscape at 70 miles per hour. Spectators watched intently, many having traveled miles to see this. Only a low fence separating the people from the cheetah served as a reminder that they were not in sub-Saharan Africa but at the San Diego Wild Animal Park. The California zoo lets visitors see wild animals in a natural setting.

The San Diego Wild Animal Park is just one of hundreds of zoos honored during April, which is Zoo and Aquarium Month. The 1,800-acre park, home to 3,000 animals of over 400 species, is one of the nation's best. The San Diego facility does not display its wildlife in cages and small enclosures. Instead, the animals roam in wide-open spaces that resemble their natural [habitats](#), allowing visitors to observe the animals as if they were in the wild.

The San Diego Wild Animal Park is able to [replicate](#) various animals' natural habitats because of its climate and terrain. The county of San Diego stretches from the Pacific Ocean to far inland. The inland area, where the animal park is located, has a hot climate that is comprised of grassy hills and valleys. It is very similar to parts of Africa and Asia, where the park's animals are from.

The animals benefit from this set-up, because they are able to behave almost as if they are in the wild. They have enough room to roam and, often, they share their enclosures with other animals. Unlike some zoo animals that spend their lives pacing in their cages, the animals at the wild animal park have ever-changing scenery that is largely dictated by Mother Nature.

Animals are not the only [beneficiaries](#) of the park's natural, open environment. Visiting the park is the next-best thing to going on an African safari. Park guests have several options for observing the animals, and each one is thrilling.

A monorail ride through the park seems to transport passengers from southern California to parts of Africa and Asia within minutes. Peering out at the rolling hills and plains of the East Africa enclosure, for example, passengers might see wildebeest, white rhinos, gazelles, or giraffes. Other parts of the ride might reveal wildlife at an Asian watering hole, an African forest, or in a mountain habitat.



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The monorail is just one option. There are other ways to get up close and personal with the animals at the park. The Photo Caravan Safari takes visitors into the enclosures on open-top trucks so that they can photograph the wildlife. The Cheetah Run Safari allows a limited number of guests to watch as a trainer exercises the world's fastest land animal. Roar & Snore campouts let visitors sleep in tents on the edge of the animals' territory, close enough to smell the elephant dung. Roar & Snore participants also get to hear what the African plains sound like at night.

Visitors can also walk around the park by entering an exhibit called Heart of Africa. The trail leads visitors through changing environments [reminiscent](#) of Africa, from open [scrub](#) to forest. Each area is home to the animals that would live there in the wild.

Although the park animals are enclosed in each habitat, zoologists designed the park to get around the typical limitations of a zoo. At Lion Camp, for example, the lions' den has a huge window at one end, alongside a tourist pathway. A heated rock next to the glass encourages the six lions to spend time in the space. That way, visitors can see them.



By allowing visitors to observe animals in their natural settings, the San Diego Wild Animal Park and other zoos like it are helping visitors to gain a new respect for wildlife. Recently, visitors watched as a cheetah relaxed and ate some meat that the zookeepers had provided. In its natural habitat, the cheetah would have had to outrun its prey to have a meal. The visitors had seen the cheetah running earlier in the day. They knew he was fast enough to catch the prey. They also realized just how hard cheetahs work in the wild.

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“Zoo Animals: Living Long, Living Well”

News: Animals in Action

CHICAGO, Illinois (Achieve3000, June 22, 2008). Even as a youngster, Rollie appeared older—and wise beyond his years. In the last few years, though, actual old age has begun catching up with the Emperor Tamarin, a type of South American monkey. Rollie's not alone. Zookeepers around the country have noticed that animals in zoos are far outliving those in the wild. This is believed to be due to improved health care and modified habitats.

The 17-year-old Rollie is considered a senior citizen of his species. His keepers say that he almost certainly would never have survived this long in the wild. However, Rollie benefited from the care of the staff at Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo. He also enjoyed a lack of predators. As a result, the tiny primate has lived so long that he has lost all but 6 of his 32 teeth. Because of this, Rollie's keepers have adapted Rollie's diet. In his younger days, Rollie munched on crunchy, raw sweet potatoes and celery. Rollie now enjoys a diet consisting primarily of soft-cooked vegetables.

Zoos around the country aren't just altering animals' diets, though. They are also providing animals with sophisticated health care.

At the San Antonio Zoo, for instance, keepers noticed that George was showing signs of old age. George is a 37-year-old tapir, which is a long-snouted forest creature. In the mornings, he appeared to experience difficulty getting up. The explanation was clear to the zoo's animal doctors: George was suffering from arthritis. It's a condition that is common among aging humans.

George was lucky. He received superior health care. It consisted of dietary additions and acupuncture. George also received medicines. These helped ease his pain. Rob Coke is the zoo's senior staff animal doctor. He said that George now "acts like he's five years younger."

Other zoos are providing not only advanced medical care, but also modified habitats for aging zoo inhabitants.

Take the New York Aquarium, for example. Caretakers noticed that a 21-year-old California sea lion named Fonzie had started hobbling. His eyes had turned cloudy, and he had lost

weight. Like George the tapir, Fonzie received excellent health care. This included thorough medical examinations and medications. Zoo staff also modified Fonzie's habitat. They relocated the elderly sea lion to an indoor pool. There, Fonzie was protected from brisk winter winds. Nearly three months later, he was ready to rejoin the other sea lions.

The increased lifespan of these animals is forcing zoo staff around the country to ponder new questions. For example: Can an aging lemur suffer from dementia?

At the St. Louis Zoo, keepers have asked the question about Ruffles. Ruffles is a 31-year-old black-and-white ruffed lemur. Some of the lemur's problems, such as arthritis, are easily identifiable and treatable. To relieve his pain, Ruffles is given a pill twice a day. This is in addition to medication for his various liver troubles. There's no easy explanation, however, for another problem. At times, Ruffles stares off into nowhere. This causes his keepers to suspect age-related dementia.

"Dementia is one of those things that's very difficult to pin down," says Joe Knobbe. Knobbe is St. Louis' manager of primates. "We can't use the same sort of testing as we do with humans," he said.

It's obvious that animals can indeed suffer from many age-related conditions, similar to those that affect many aging humans. But thanks to caring zoo staffers, zoo animals are enjoying much longer and more comfortable lives than they would have in the wild.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Sixth Grade Poster Rubric

CATEGORY	5	4	3	2	1	Points Earned
Creativity/ Originality	The poster shows a very original presentation of the materials which captures the viewer's attention and shows that the student went over and beyond the requirements, which were all met and exceeded. A great deal of time was spent on creativity.	The poster shows a lot of originality; good variety and blending of materials. The poster is very interesting to the viewer. The student spent a lot of time on the work and most of the requirements were met. A lot of time was spent on creativity.	The poster has some originality and variety of materials. Some but not all the requirements were fulfilled. It shows some creativity and that moderate amount of time was taken to create the poster. Viewers have some interest.	The poster has little originality or variety of materials. Few of the requirements are met. It shows little creativity and that minimum amount of time was taken to create the poster. Viewers have little interest.	The poster has no originality. Insufficient use of materials. None of the requirements were met. It shows no creativity and that almost no time was taken to create the poster. Viewers have no interest.	
Quality of Poster Presentation	The poster is effective in relating all of the topics and requirements. Physical appearance of project show attention to detail in terms of lettering, organization, typing proofreading, neatness, picture & art labels etc.	The poster is interesting and adequately addresses the requirements and topics. Good physical appearance. Minor flaws in details.	The poster is somewhat interesting and vaguely addresses the requirements and topics. Appearance is not very appealing. Moderate errors in details.	The poster is not interesting and barely addresses the requirements and topic. Some vital elements are missing. Physical appearance is not appealing. Major errors in details.	The poster is not interesting and badly done and does not meet the requirements or topic. Vital elements are incomplete or not appropriate. Unappealing with extreme errors in details.	

Argumentative Writing Rubric

Purpose and Forms: “Arguments are used for many purposes—to change the reader’s point of view, to bring about some action on the reader’s part, or to ask the reader to accept the writer’s explanation or evaluation of a concept, issue, or problem. An argument is a reasoned, logical way of demonstrating that the writer’s position, belief, or conclusion is valid.”

Argument	Advanced 4 90-100	Proficient 3 70-89	Basic 2 60-69	Below Basic 1 50-59
Ideas/Purpose: The argument is focused and clearly states the claim(s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim(s) is clearly stated and distinguished from alternate or opposing claims Claim(s) is purposefully focused and consistent Complex claims are well-developed Alternate or opposing claims are thoroughly addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim(s) is clearly stated and distinguished from alternate or opposing claims Claim(s) is focused and consistent Alternate or opposing claims are addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim(s) is sometimes clear, focused or consistent Alternate or opposing claims are sometimes addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim(s) is unclear, unfocused, inconsistent or missing Alternate or opposing claims are not addressed or missing
Organization: The writing has a clear and effective organizational structure creating unity and completeness.	Claims, reasons, and evidence are organized into clear categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skillful and varied use of transitions Logical progression of ideas from 	Claims, reasons, and evidence are organized into clear categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appropriate use of transitions with some variety 	Claims, reasons, and evidence are inconsistently organized into categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some use of transitions Inadequate progression of 	Claims, reasons, and evidence are inconsistently organized into categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no use of transitions Confusing progression of ideas

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> beginning to end Purposeful introduction and conclusion Strong connections among ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate progression of ideas from beginning to end Evident introduction and conclusion Adequate connections among ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ideas from beginning to end Ineffective introduction and conclusion Weak connections among ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing introduction and/or conclusion No connections among ideas
<p>Elaboration of Evidence: The claim is developed and supported with logical reasoning and relevant evidence using accurate, credible sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides comprehensive support/evidence for the claim(s), demonstrating a thorough understanding of the topic or text Presents well-chosen evidence (sources, facts, and details) Skillfully integrates evidence with correct citations Analyzes and draws strong conclusions from evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides adequate support/evidence for the claim(s), demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text Uses relevant, logical evidence (sources, facts, and details) Integrates evidence from sources with generally correct citations Analyzes and draws logical conclusions from evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides inadequate support/evidence for the claim(s), demonstrating a partial understanding of the topic or text Uses some irrelevant, repetitive, or inadequate evidence (sources, facts, and details) Limited integration of evidence from sources with some attempt at citations Inconsistently analyzes evidence Conclusions drawn are sometimes not logical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides little or no support/evidence for the claim(s), demonstrating a lack of understanding of the topic or text Frequently uses irrelevant, repetitive, or inadequate evidence (sources, facts, and details) Does not integrate evidence from sources or lacks citations Fails to analyze evidence Conclusions drawn are not logical or are missing

<p>Language and Vocabulary: The writing uses precise and topic-specific language and maintains a formal/appropriate style.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses precise, academic language • Use of topic-specific vocabulary is clearly appropriate for the audience and purpose • Establishes and consistently maintains a formal/appropriate style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a mix of precise with more general language • Use of topic-specific vocabulary is generally appropriate for the audience and purpose • Establishes and generally maintains a formal/appropriate style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses simplistic language • Inconsistent use of topic-specific vocabulary • Lacks a consistent formal/appropriate style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses limited or vague language • Lacks topic-specific vocabulary • Lack of formal /appropriate style shows little sense of audience and purposes
<p>Conventions: The writing demonstrates a command of conventions and assigned format.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal errors/patterns of error in usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and format • Skillful use of sentence structure enhances meaning 	<p>Minimal errors/patterns of error in usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and format</p>	<p>Frequent errors/patterns of error in usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and format</p>	<p>Severe errors/patterns of error in usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and format interfered with understanding</p>

0=no evidence/missing



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