Name: _____ Date: _____

Two Otters and the Frozen Ladder

Circle group

When the first hard freeze came, the pond near Willow Bend turned to ice. The otters Kip and Nell loved it. They slid across the surface on their bellies, spinning and whooping all afternoon.

But when it was time to go home, there was a problem. Their den was on top of the muddy bank, and the bank had frozen into a steep, slick wall. Kip tried to climb it alone. He scrabbled for a moment, then slid right back to the bottom.

"Let me try," said Nell, and she slid back too.

They sat at the bottom and grew cold. The sky began to turn gray.

"Wait," said Kip. "What if one of us holds on while the other climbs?"

Kip dug his claws into a frozen root and braced his back against the bank. Nell climbed over him like a ladder, stepped onto the top, and grabbed a branch with both paws. Then she reached down and pulled Kip up by the scruff of his neck.

Soon they were curled together in the den, warm and sleepy. "A wall is only a ladder," said Nell, "if you know who will hold the bottom."

Kip yawned. "And who will reach down from the top."

Questions

1. What did Kip and Nell do on the frozen pond?

_____

_____

2. Why could the otters not get home at first?

_____

_____

3. How did Kip help Nell climb?

_____

_____

4. How did Nell help Kip after she reached the top?

_____

_____

5. Why did climbing alone fail for each otter?

_____

_____

6. What does Nell mean by saying a wall is only a ladder?

_____

_____

Words to know

slick: smooth and slippery
scrabbled: scratched and clawed to try to get a grip
braced: pressed firmly against something to stay steady
scruff: the loose skin at the back of an animal's neck
den: an animal's home

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Two Otters and the Frozen Ladder

Triangle group

When the first hard freeze arrived, the pond near Willow Bend turned completely to ice. The otters Kip and Nell were delighted. They glided across the glassy surface on their bellies, spinning and whooping happily for the entire afternoon.

But when it came time to go home, they faced a serious problem. Their den sat at the top of the muddy bank, and overnight the bank had frozen into a steep, slick wall. Kip attempted to climb it alone. He scrabbled frantically for a moment, then slid right back down to the bottom.

"Let me try," said Nell, and she tumbled back down as well.

They sat at the base of the bank and grew steadily colder. The sky began to darken to a dull gray.

"Wait," said Kip thoughtfully. "What if one of us holds on while the other climbs?"

Kip dug his claws into a frozen root and braced his back firmly against the bank. Nell climbed right over him as though he were a ladder, stepped onto the top, and seized a branch with both paws. Then she reached down and hauled Kip up by the scruff of his neck.

Before long they were curled together in the den, warm and drowsy. "A wall is only a ladder," observed Nell, "if you know who will hold the bottom."

Kip yawned. "And who will reach down from the top."

Questions

1. What did Kip and Nell do on the frozen pond?

_____

_____

2. Why were the otters unable to get home at first?

_____

_____

3. How did Kip help Nell climb the bank?

_____

_____

4. How did Nell help Kip once she reached the top?

_____

_____

5. Why did climbing alone fail for each otter?

_____

_____

6. What does Nell mean when she says that a wall is only a ladder?

_____

_____

Words to know

slick: smooth and slippery
scrabbled: scratched and clawed to try to get a grip
braced: pressed firmly against something to stay steady
scruff: the loose skin at the back of an animal's neck
den: an animal's home

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Two Otters and the Frozen Ladder

Square group

When the first hard freeze arrived, the pond near Willow Bend turned completely to ice, and the otters Kip and Nell were delighted. They glided across the glassy surface on their bellies, spinning and whooping happily for the entire afternoon.

But when it came time to go home, they faced a serious problem. Their den sat at the top of the muddy bank, and overnight the bank had frozen into a steep, slick wall. Kip attempted to climb it alone, scrabbling frantically for a moment before he slid right back down to the bottom.

"Let me try," said Nell, and she tumbled back down as well.

They sat at the base of the bank and grew steadily colder as the sky began to darken to a dull gray.

"Wait," said Kip thoughtfully. "What if one of us holds on while the other climbs?"

Kip dug his claws into a frozen root and braced his back firmly against the bank. Nell climbed right over him as though he were a ladder, stepped onto the top, and seized a branch with both paws. Then she reached down and hauled Kip up by the scruff of his neck.

Before long they were curled together in the den, warm and drowsy. "A wall is only a ladder," observed Nell, "if you know who will hold the bottom."

Kip yawned. "And who will reach down from the top."

Questions

1. What did Kip and Nell do on the frozen pond?

_____

_____

2. Why were the otters unable to get home at first?

_____

_____

3. How did Kip help Nell climb the bank?

_____

_____

4. How did Nell help Kip once she reached the top?

_____

_____

5. Why did climbing alone fail for each otter?

_____

_____

6. What does Nell mean when she says that a wall is only a ladder?

_____

_____

Words to know

slick: smooth and slippery
braced: pressed firmly against something to stay steady
scruff: the loose skin at the back of an animal's neck
den: an animal's home

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Two Otters and the Frozen Ladder

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Two Otters and the Frozen Ladder

Easier · 205 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.3

1. They slid across the ice on their bellies, spinning and whooping.
2. The muddy bank had frozen into a steep, slick wall.
3. He held onto a frozen root and braced his back so she could climb over him.
4. She grabbed a branch and pulled him up by the scruff of his neck.
5. The ice was too slippery and there was nothing for a single otter to push against.
6. A hard problem becomes easy when friends work together and each does a part.

Triangle: Two Otters and the Frozen Ladder

This passage · 231 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4

1. They glided across the ice on their bellies, spinning and whooping.
2. The muddy bank had frozen overnight into a steep, slick wall.
3. He dug his claws into a frozen root and braced his back so she could climb over him.
4. She seized a branch and hauled him up by the scruff of his neck.
5. The ice was too slippery and a lone otter had nothing solid to push against.
6. A difficult problem becomes manageable when friends cooperate and each does a part.

Square: Two Otters and the Frozen Ladder

Harder · 233 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5

1. They glided across the ice on their bellies, spinning and whooping.
2. The muddy bank had frozen overnight into a steep, slick wall.
3. He dug his claws into a frozen root and braced his back so she could climb over him.
4. She seized a branch and hauled him up by the scruff of his neck.
5. The ice was too slippery and a lone otter had nothing solid to push against.
6. A difficult problem becomes manageable when friends cooperate and each does a part.