Name: _____ Date: _____

The Mudskipper Fish Out of Water

Circle group

At low tide, the muddy shores of warm coasts in Africa, Asia and Australia show an odd sight. Fish are walking. These fish are mudskippers. They spend much of their lives out of the water.

A mudskipper props itself up on its strong front fins. The fins work like short arms. It drags its body forward. It can also flick its tail to skip across the mud. Its eyes sit high on its head, like little periscopes. It can watch for birds and other enemies while its body stays low. Each eye can move on its own, so the fish can look in many directions.

Breathing is the big problem for a fish on land. The mudskipper takes in oxygen through its skin and through the lining of its mouth and throat. These only work while they are wet. So the fish must keep its skin damp. It rolls in shallow puddles. It also carries a little water in its gill chambers to freshen up.

Mudskippers dig burrows in the mud. A burrow is a safe place to hide, lay eggs and wait out the high tide. Males guard their patch of mud. They leap and raise their fins to show off. Most fish would be stuck on the mud, but the mudskipper has found a way to live there.

Questions

1. Where do mudskippers live?

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_____

2. How does a mudskipper move across the mud?

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_____

3. Why are the fish's eyes on top of its head useful?

_____

_____

4. What do mudskippers use burrows for?

_____

_____

5. Why must a mudskipper keep its skin damp?

_____

_____

6. Why would most fish be stuck on the mud?

_____

_____

Words to know

periscopes: tubes with mirrors that let you see over a barrier
oxygen: the gas in air and water that animals need to breathe

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: _____

The Mudskipper Fish Out of Water

Triangle group

At low tide, the muddy shores of tropical coasts in Africa, Asia and Australia fill with an odd sight: fish that are walking. These animals are mudskippers, and they spend much of their lives out of the water.

A mudskipper moves by propping itself on its strong front fins, which are shaped like short arms, and dragging its body forward. A quick flick of the tail can also send it skipping across the mud. High on its head are two eyes that rise like periscopes, which let it keep watch for birds and other enemies while its body stays low. They also move independently, so the fish can scan in several directions at once.

The greatest challenge for any fish on land is breathing. Mudskippers solve it by taking in oxygen through their skin and the inside of their mouth and throat, but these surfaces work only while they stay wet. For that reason, a mudskipper must keep its skin damp. It rolls in shallow puddles, and it also keeps a small supply of water tucked inside its gill chambers to refresh itself.

Mudskippers also tunnel into the mud. A burrow gives a safe place to hide, to lay eggs and to wait out the high tide. Males defend their patch of mud, and they leap and raise their fins to impress rivals and mates. In an environment where most fish would be stranded and helpless, the mudskipper has learned to thrive.

Questions

1. Where do mudskippers live?

_____

_____

2. How does a mudskipper move across the mud?

_____

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3. Why are the mudskipper's eyes on top of its head helpful?

_____

_____

4. What do mudskippers use their burrows for?

_____

_____

5. Why must a mudskipper keep its skin damp?

_____

_____

6. Why does the writer say that most fish would be stranded on the mud?

_____

_____

Words to know

tropical: in the hot, wet regions near the equator
periscopes: tubes with mirrors that let you see over a barrier
independently: separately, without needing the other to move too
oxygen: the gas in air and water that animals need to breathe
stranded: left stuck in a place that is hard to leave

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: _____

The Mudskipper Fish Out of Water

Square group

At low tide, the muddy shores of tropical coasts in Africa, Asia and Australia present a strange spectacle: fish that are walking. These animals are mudskippers, and they spend a surprisingly large share of their lives out of the water.

A mudskipper travels by propping itself on its powerful front fins, which resemble short arms, and dragging its body forward. It can also flick its tail to leap, or skip, across the mud. Its eyes sit high on its head, like periscopes, enabling it to watch for birds and other enemies while its body remains low. The eyes also move independently of each other, so the fish can scan in several directions at once.

The greatest challenge for any fish on land is breathing. Mudskippers overcome it by absorbing oxygen through their skin and through the lining of their mouth and throat, but these surfaces function only while they remain wet. For that reason, a mudskipper must constantly keep its skin damp. It rolls in shallow puddles, and it carries a small reserve of water in its gill chambers to refresh itself.

Mudskippers also excavate burrows in the mud. A burrow provides a secure place to hide, to lay eggs and to wait out the high tide. Males defend their patch of mud, leaping and raising their fins to impress rivals and potential mates. In an environment where most fish would be stranded and helpless, the mudskipper has discovered a way to thrive.

Questions

1. Where do mudskippers live?

_____

_____

2. How does a mudskipper travel across the mud?

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_____

3. Why is it helpful that the mudskipper's eyes sit high on its head?

_____

_____

4. What purposes do mudskipper burrows serve?

_____

_____

5. Why must a mudskipper constantly keep its skin damp?

_____

_____

6. Why does the writer say that most fish would be stranded on the mud?

_____

_____

Words to know

tropical: in the hot, wet regions near the equator
periscopes: tubes with mirrors that let you see over a barrier
independently: separately, without needing the other to move too
oxygen: the gas in air and water that animals need to breathe
stranded: left stuck in a place that is hard to leave

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: The Mudskipper Fish Out of Water

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

Circle: The Mudskipper Fish Out of Water

Easier · 220 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.1

1. On muddy shores of warm coasts in Africa, Asia and Australia.
2. It props itself on its front fins and drags forward, or flicks its tail to skip.
3. It can watch for enemies while its body stays low.
4. To hide, lay eggs and wait out the high tide.
5. It breathes through its skin and mouth lining, which work only when wet.
6. Most fish must stay in water to breathe, so they could not live there at low tide.

Triangle: The Mudskipper Fish Out of Water

This passage · 242 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.1

1. On the muddy shores of tropical coasts in Africa, Asia and Australia.
2. It props itself on its front fins and drags forward, or flicks its tail to skip.
3. It can watch for enemies while its body stays low.
4. To hide, lay eggs and wait out the high tide.
5. It breathes through its skin and mouth lining, which work only while wet.
6. Most fish need to stay in water to breathe, so they could not cope with the mud at low tide.

Square: The Mudskipper Fish Out of Water

Harder · 243 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.6

1. On the muddy shores of tropical coasts in Africa, Asia and Australia.
2. It props itself on its front fins and drags its body forward, or flicks its tail to skip.
3. It can watch for enemies while its body stays low.
4. They are used to hide, to lay eggs and to wait out the high tide.
5. It breathes through its skin and mouth lining, which function only while wet.
6. Most fish must remain in water to breathe, so they could not cope with the mud at low tide.