Name: _____ Date: _____

The Arctic Tern Who Took the Long Way

Circle group

A young Arctic tern named Wick hatched on a gravel beach near the top of the world. There, the summer sun barely set. When autumn came, the days grew short. The adult terns rose into the sky and turned south. Wick followed, but he grumbled the whole way.

"This is silly," he said to an old tern named Marrow. "We fly past warm beaches. We fly past fat, silver fish. We keep going. Why must we fly to the bottom of the planet?"

Marrow did not answer right away. "Keep flying," she said. "Watch what you pass."

Wick watched. He saw whales rise through the foam. He saw long coasts glow at sunrise. He saw storms roll over the open sea like gray mountains. He rested on the swells and ate little fish where cold water met warm. Weeks turned into months, and his wings grew stronger with every mile.

At last, they reached the far south. The summer sun was shining there, and food was everywhere. Wick saw that the beaches he had passed would be bare and frozen by now. The long route had carried him from one season of plenty to another.

"You were right," he told Marrow, a little shyly.

"I do not say it often," she said, "but a long way is not always a wasted way. Sometimes the trip is what makes the bird."

When spring came, Wick turned north. He felt sure of himself and was eager to see it all again.

Questions

1. Where did Wick hatch?

_____

_____

2. What did Wick complain about?

_____

_____

3. What did Wick see on the trip?

_____

_____

4. What did the terns find in the far south?

_____

_____

5. Why would the warm beaches have been a poor choice?

_____

_____

6. What does Marrow mean by her last words?

_____

_____

Words to know

swells: long, rolling waves on the open sea

plenty: a large supply, more than enough

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 Arctic Tern Who Took the Long Way

Triangle group

A young Arctic tern named Wick hatched on a gravel beach near the top of the world, where the summer sun barely set. When autumn came and the days began to shorten, the adult terns lifted into the sky and turned south, and Wick followed them, although he grumbled about it the whole way.

He complained to an old tern named Marrow that it was absurd to fly past warm beaches and fat, silver fish and keep going regardless, and he demanded to know why they had to travel to the very bottom of the planet. Marrow did not answer directly. She told him only to keep flying and to watch carefully what he passed.

Wick watched. He saw whales rise through foam, long coasts glowing at sunrise, and storms that rolled across the open ocean like gray mountains. He rested on rolling swells and fed on little fishes where cold currents met warm ones, and as weeks turned into months, his wings grew stronger with every mile.

At last, the terns reached the far southern waters, where the summer sun was shining and food was everywhere. Wick realized that the beaches he had passed would have been bare and frozen by now, and that the whole long route had carried him from one season of plenty to another.

"You were right," he told Marrow, a little sheepishly.

"I rarely say it," she replied, "but a long way is not always a wasted way. Sometimes the journey is the thing that makes the bird."

When spring returned, Wick turned north with new confidence, eager to see everything again.

Questions

1. Where did Wick hatch?

_____

_____

2. What did Wick complain about?

_____

_____

3. What did Wick see during the journey?

_____

_____

4. What did the terns find in the far southern waters?

_____

_____

5. Why would the warm beaches he passed have been a poor choice?

_____

_____

6. What does Marrow mean by the last thing she says?

_____

_____

Words to know

absurd: silly or against all common sense
swells: long, rolling waves on the open sea
currents: steady flows of water moving in one direction
plenty: a large supply, more than enough
sheepishly: in an embarrassed way, after being wrong

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 Arctic Tern Who Took the Long Way

Square group

A young Arctic tern named Wick hatched on a gravel beach near the very top of the world, where the summer sun scarcely set at all. When autumn arrived and the days began to shorten noticeably, the adult terns lifted into the sky and turned toward the south, and Wick followed them, although he grumbled about the whole enterprise for the entire journey.

He complained to an elderly tern named Marrow that it was absolutely absurd to fly past warm beaches and fat, silver fish and to keep going regardless, and he demanded to know why they had to travel all the way to the very bottom of the planet. Marrow did not answer him directly. She told him only to keep flying and to watch carefully everything that he passed.

Wick watched. He saw whales rise through the foam, long coastlines glowing at sunrise, and storms that rolled across the open ocean like enormous gray mountains. He rested on the rolling swells and fed on little fishes at the places where cold currents met warm ones, and as weeks turned into months, his wings grew stronger with every passing mile.

At last, the terns reached the far southern waters, where the summer sun was shining and food was abundant everywhere. Wick realized that the beaches he had passed would have been bare and frozen by now, and that the whole long route had carried him from one season of plenty to another.

"You were right," he told Marrow, a little sheepishly.

"I rarely say it," she replied, "but a long way is not always a wasted way. Sometimes the journey itself is the thing that makes the bird."

When spring returned, Wick turned north with fresh confidence, eager to see everything all over again.

Questions

1. Where did Wick hatch?

_____

_____

2. What did Wick complain about?

_____

_____

3. What did Wick see during the journey?

_____

_____

4. What did the terns find in the far southern waters?

_____

_____

5. Why would the warm beaches he passed have been a poor choice?

_____

_____

6. What does Marrow mean by the last thing she says?

_____

_____

Words to know

absurd: silly or against all common sense
swells: long, rolling waves on the open sea
currents: steady flows of water moving in one direction
plenty: a large supply, more than enough
sheepishly: in an embarrassed way, after being wrong

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 Arctic Tern Who Took the Long Way

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

Circle: The Arctic Tern Who Took the Long Way

Easier · 249 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.3

1. On a gravel beach near the top of the world.
2. They flew past warm beaches and fish, and still had to fly to the bottom of the planet.
3. Whales, glowing coasts, and storms over the open sea.
4. Summer sunshine and food everywhere.
5. They would be bare and frozen by the time the season changed.
6. A long trip makes a bird stronger and wiser, so it is not wasted.

Triangle: The Arctic Tern Who Took the Long Way

This passage · 268 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.6

1. On a gravel beach near the top of the world.
2. That they flew past warm beaches and fish and still had to travel to the bottom of the planet.
3. Whales, glowing coasts, and storms rolling across the open ocean.
4. Summer sunshine and food everywhere.
5. They would have been bare and frozen by the time the season changed.
6. The long trip helps a bird grow stronger and wiser, so it is not wasted.

Square: The Arctic Tern Who Took the Long Way

Harder · 295 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 9.1

1. On a gravel beach near the very top of the world.
2. That they flew past warm beaches and fish and still had to travel to the bottom of the planet.
3. Whales, glowing coastlines, and storms rolling across the open ocean.
4. Summer sunshine and plenty of food.
5. They would have been bare and frozen by the time the season changed.
6. The long trip helps a bird grow stronger and wiser, so it is not wasted.