Name: _____ Date: _____

The Axolotl Who Stayed in the Canal

Circle group

In an old canal lined with reeds, an axolotl named Pico drifted in the cool green water. He had feathery fronds on each side of his head and a wide, smiling mouth. For most of his life, he had been happy.

That changed one spring when the young frogs began to leave. Their tails shrank and their legs grew strong. One by one, they climbed onto the bank and hopped away across the grass. Pico watched them go. "They are growing up," he told a snail, "and I am the same as I was last year."

The snail thought about this slowly. "Maybe you are not behind," she said. "Maybe you are just different."

Pico was not sure. He tried to climb onto a flat stone, but his gills felt dry and strange in the air. He slid back into the water. He felt silly and a little sad.

Later that week, a big storm washed silt into the canal and made the water cloudy. The frogs could not reach their old shelter. A few tadpoles who had stayed behind were scared of the dark water. Pico had lived in the murk all his life, and he swam through it with ease. He led the tadpoles along the reeds to a clear, quiet spot.

After that, he did not envy the frogs. Growing up did not have to mean leaving. Some creatures grow by moving on. Others grow by knowing the place they call home.

Questions

1. Where did Pico live?

_____

_____

2. What did the young frogs do in the spring?

_____

_____

3. What happened when Pico climbed onto a flat stone?

_____

_____

4. How did Pico help the tadpoles in the storm?

_____

_____

5. Why did Pico feel sad when the frogs left?

_____

_____

6. What does Pico learn about growing up?

_____

_____

Words to know

canal: a long channel dug to hold or carry water
fronds: feathery, leaf-like parts that stick out
silt: fine soil carried along and dropped by water
murk: thick, dark, cloudy water

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 Axolotl Who Stayed in the Canal

Triangle group

In an old canal lined with reeds and floating flower beds, an axolotl named Pico drifted through the cool green water. He had feathery fronds on either side of his head and a wide, smiling mouth, and for most of his life he had been perfectly content with the world around him.

That changed one spring when the young frogs in the canal began to leave. Their tails shrank and their legs grew strong, and one by one they climbed onto the bank and hopped away across the grass. Pico watched them go with growing unease, and he told a passing snail that the frogs were growing up while he remained exactly the same as he had been the year before. The snail considered this slowly and suggested that perhaps he was not behind at all, but simply different.

Pico was not convinced. He tried clambering onto a flat stone, but his gills felt dry and strange in the open air, and he slid back into the water with relief, feeling foolish and a little sad.

Later that week, a heavy storm swept silt into the canal and clouded the water. The frogs on the bank could not reach their old shelter, and a few tadpoles that had stayed behind were frightened by the darkness. Pico, who had spent his whole life in the murk, swam through it easily and led the tadpoles along the reeds to a clear, quiet corner.

Afterward, he no longer envied the frogs. Growing up, he decided, did not have to mean leaving. Some creatures grow by moving on, and others grow by becoming wise about the place they already call home.

Questions

1. Where did Pico live?

_____

_____

2. What did the young frogs do in the spring?

_____

_____

3. What happened when Pico climbed onto a flat stone?

_____

_____

4. How did Pico help the tadpoles during the storm?

_____

_____

5. Why did Pico feel sad when the frogs left?

_____

_____

6. What does Pico finally understand about growing up?

_____

_____

Words to know

canal: a long channel dug to hold or carry water
fronds: feathery, leaf-like parts that stick out
content: happy and satisfied with how things are
silt: fine soil carried along and dropped by water
murk: thick, dark, cloudy water

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 Axolotl Who Stayed in the Canal

Square group

In an old canal lined with reeds and floating beds of flowers, an axolotl named Pico drifted contentedly through the cool green water. He had feathery fronds on either side of his head and a wide, perpetually smiling mouth, and for most of his life he had been perfectly satisfied with the world around him.

That changed one spring when the young frogs in the canal began to depart. Their tails shrank and their legs grew strong, and one by one they climbed onto the bank and hopped away across the grass. Pico watched them go with growing unease, and he confided to a passing snail that the frogs were growing up while he remained exactly the same as he had been the previous year. The snail considered this at her usual unhurried pace and suggested that perhaps he was not behind at all, but simply different.

Pico was not convinced. He attempted to clamber onto a flat stone, but his gills felt dry and strange in the open air, and he slid back into the water with considerable relief, feeling foolish and a little sad.

Later that week, a heavy storm swept silt into the canal and clouded the water until nothing was visible. The frogs on the bank could not find their way back to their old shelter, and a few tadpoles that had stayed behind were terrified by the sudden darkness. Pico, who had spent his entire life in the murk, swam through it effortlessly and led the frightened tadpoles along the reeds to a clear, quiet corner.

Afterward, he no longer envied the frogs. Growing up, he concluded, did not necessarily have to mean leaving. Some creatures grow by moving on, and others grow by becoming wise about the place they already call home.

Questions

1. Where did Pico live?

_____

_____

2. What did the young frogs do in the spring?

_____

_____

3. What happened when Pico climbed onto a flat stone?

_____

_____

4. How did Pico help the tadpoles during the storm?

_____

_____

5. Why did Pico feel sad when the frogs left?

_____

_____

6. What does Pico finally understand about growing up?

_____

_____

Words to know

canal: a long channel dug to hold or carry water
fronds: feathery, leaf-like parts that stick out
content: happy and satisfied with how things are
silt: fine soil carried along and dropped by water
murk: thick, dark, cloudy water

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 Axolotl Who Stayed in the Canal

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

Circle: The Axolotl Who Stayed in the Canal

Easier · 245 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.6

1. In an old canal lined with reeds.
2. They lost their tails, grew legs, and hopped away across the grass.
3. His gills felt dry and strange, so he slid back into the water.
4. He led them through the cloudy water to a clear, quiet spot.
5. He thought he was not growing up because he stayed the same.
6. It does not have to mean leaving; some creatures grow by knowing their home.

Triangle: The Axolotl Who Stayed in the Canal

This passage · 277 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.8

1. In an old canal lined with reeds.
2. They lost their tails, grew legs, and hopped away onto the grass.
3. His gills felt dry and strange, so he slid back into the water.
4. He led them through the cloudy water to a clear, quiet corner.
5. He thought he was not growing up because he stayed the same.
6. It does not have to mean leaving; some creatures grow by knowing their home well.

Square: The Axolotl Who Stayed in the Canal

Harder · 298 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 9.3

1. In an old canal lined with reeds and floating flowers.
2. They lost their tails, grew strong legs, and hopped away onto the grass.
3. His gills felt dry and strange in the air, so he slid back into the water.
4. He led them through the cloudy water to a clear, quiet corner.
5. He believed he was not growing up because he stayed the same.
6. It does not have to mean leaving; some creatures grow by knowing their home well.