

## China The Giant Panda

Deep in a forest, a black-and-white bear sits peacefully. It chews the green leaves of a plant. The bear is alone, but there are others not too far away. Later, it might amble over to find them. They may play together. This is the giant panda in nature.



The giant panda is a bear native to China. It is unusual for a bear to be found only in one place. For over a hundred years, scientists thought that giant pandas might belong to the raccoon family. Then research in the 1980s showed that giant pandas are bears after all. These bears are black and white, with black patches of fur around their eyes.

Giant pandas live in bamboo forests, high in the mountains in the western part of China. This is their habitat. Here they eat bamboo. Bamboo is a grass that can grow 100 feet high. It has hollow green **stalks**.<sup>1</sup> Giant pandas peel off the leaves and stems to eat. Their paws are well adapted to this task. They have a special thumb that helps them grasp the bamboo. Giant pandas spend about 10-15 hours a day eating this plant.

Giant pandas are an **endangered species**.<sup>2</sup> Based on a survey completed in the mid-1980s, researchers determined there were only 1,000 giant pandas left in the wild. This was the lowest number ever recorded. One reason the population of giant pandas had declined is that they had less bamboo to eat. A lot of the bamboo forests where giant pandas lived had been wiped out by logging. Logging is the practice of cutting down trees for lumber. Loggers had cut down the forests for fire wood, and the cleared land was used for farming.

In 1998, the Chinese government banned logging in the giant panda habitats in order to protect giant pandas. However, there are still some threats to giant pandas, and giant pandas are killed each year. China has more people than any country in the world, and these people need food, clothing, and homes. People

---

<sup>1</sup> **stalk** – the stem of a plant

<sup>2</sup> **endangered species** – a type of animal that is disappearing from the world

still illegally log in the giant panda habitats. In addition, sometimes giant pandas get killed by getting caught in traps that people set to hunt other animals, such as deer and takins.

Conservationists and the Chinese government have tried to eliminate the threats to giant pandas. Thanks to their efforts, the giant panda population overall has been increasing. In 2004, the giant panda population reached 1,600, and it continues to grow. Many people are working hard to strengthen the protection of giant panda habitats, learn more about the bears, and end the remaining threats. Thus, the future looks hopeful for giant pandas.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. According to the passage, what helps pandas eat bamboo?
  - a. sharp teeth
  - b. long arms and legs
  - c. a tail that can wrap around the stalks
  - d. a special thumb
  
2. What is the purpose of the first paragraph in this passage?
  - a. to introduce the reader to giant pandas by describing one
  - b. to prove to the reader that giant pandas are in danger of dying out
  - c. to explain why bamboo is so important to giant pandas
  - d. to argue that giant pandas actually belong to the raccoon family
  
3. In the mid-1980s, researchers determined there were only 1,000 giant pandas left in the wild. In 2004, the giant panda population reached 1,600. Based on the text, what is one thing that may have caused this increase?
  - a. decrease in the population of China
  - b. increase in the population of China
  - c. increased logging in the bamboo forests of western China
  - d. the Chinese government's ban on logging
  
4. Read the following sentences: "Giant pandas live in bamboo forests, high in the mountains in the western part of China. This is their habitat."

In the passage, the word **habitat** means

  - a. mountains in western China
  - b. an activity or behavior done over and over
  - c. an animal's natural home
  - d. daily life
  
5. The main purpose of this passage is to
  - a. list the reasons that giant pandas have become an endangered species
  - b. show that giant pandas and black bears are closely related
  - c. convince people that they should take action to protect giant pandas
  - d. describe giant pandas and the dangers facing them

6. According to the text, how does logging affect the giant panda population in China?

---

---

---

---

7. The text concludes with the following statement: “the future looks hopeful for giant pandas.” What information does the text provide that supports this statement?

---

---

---

---

8. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

A lot of the bamboo forests where giant pandas lived had been wiped out by logging. \_\_\_\_\_, the giant panda population decreased.

- a. However
- b. As a result
- c. Although
- d. In contrast

9. Read the following sentence.

**In 1998, the Chinese government banned logging in the giant panda habitats in order to protect giant pandas.**

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. What is the main subject of the sentence? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the main verb of the sentence? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Where did the Chinese government ban logging? in the giant panda habitats

4. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** endangered: threatened.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Teacher Guide and Answers****Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 870

1. According to the passage, what helps pandas eat bamboo?
  - a. sharp teeth
  - b. long arms and legs
  - c. a tail that can wrap around the stalks
  - d. a special thumb**
  
2. What is the purpose of the first paragraph in this passage?
  - a. to introduce the reader to giant pandas by describing one**
  - b. to prove to the reader that giant pandas are in danger of dying out
  - c. to explain why bamboo is so important to giant pandas
  - d. to argue that giant pandas actually belong to the raccoon family
  
3. In the mid-1980s, researchers determined there were only 1,000 giant pandas left in the wild. In 2004, the giant panda population reached 1,600. Based on the text, what is one thing that may have caused this increase?
  - a. decrease in the population of China
  - b. increase in the population of China
  - c. increased logging in the bamboo forests of western China
  - d. the Chinese government's ban on logging**
  
4. Read the following sentences: "Giant pandas live in bamboo forests, high in the mountains in the western part of China. This is their habitat."

In the passage, the word **habitat** means

- a. mountains in western China
  - b. an activity or behavior done over and over
  - c. an animal's natural home**
  - d. daily life
- 
5. The main purpose of this passage is to
    - a. list the reasons that giant pandas have become an endangered species
    - b. show that giant pandas and black bears are closely related
    - c. convince people that they should take action to protect giant pandas
    - d. describe giant pandas and the dangers facing them**

6. According to the text, how does logging affect the giant panda population in China?

**Suggested answer:** Logging negatively affects the giant panda population in China as it decreases the amount of bamboo available for the giant pandas to eat.

7. The text concludes with the following statement: “the future looks hopeful for giant pandas.” What information does the text provide that supports this statement?

**Suggested answer:** The text explains that the government has taken steps to protect the giant panda, such as banning logging, and that many people are working to strengthen the protection of giant panda habitats, learn more about the bears, and end the remaining threats. The fact that the giant panda population has increased since the mid-1980s also supports the statement with which the text concludes.

8. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

A lot of the bamboo forests where giant pandas lived had been wiped out by logging. \_\_\_\_\_, the giant panda population decreased.

- a. However
- b. As a result**
- c. Although
- d. In contrast

9. Read the following sentence.

In 1998, the Chinese government banned logging in the giant panda habitats in order to protect giant pandas.

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. What is the main subject of the sentence? the Chinese government
2. What is the main verb of the sentence? banned
3. Where did the Chinese government ban logging? **in the giant panda habitats**
4. Why? to protect giant pandas

10. **Vocabulary Word:** endangered: threatened.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.