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Frog Background Check

By Margaret Whisnant



Frogs are one of Earth's oldest living creatures. For the past 300 million years or so, they have been making kooky noises, surviving, and thriving. At the last count, herpetologists have logged about 7,000 different species. Frogs aren't one of those aww-how-cute animals, but a background check unmask a lot of wow-factor, beginning with their biological classification as amphibians.

Derived from the Greek words *amphi*, meaning "of both kinds," and *bio*- meaning "life," the name *amphibian* says frogs "have a double life." No, they aren't in the witness protection program or operating as spies, but they do live in water and on land. Amphibians are further classified into three groups, and frogs belong to the order Anura. This word is a combination of the Greek prefix *an-*, meaning "without" and the base word *oura*-, "tail." Etymologists think the word *frog* is from an old Norse word that means "hopper." And so, a frog is a "tailless hopper that can live in water or on land." Imagine that on a name tag at an amphibian convention!

Frogs inhabit every continent except Antarctica. They flourish in fresh-water habitats, trees, hot deserts, and extreme cold. The highest concentration is in the tropical regions. Brazil tops the list with 932 different species. The 300 or so U.S. species aren't aware that April is National Frog Month, but it is.

People generally think of the order Anura as two different animals—frogs and toads. Those that live in water and have smooth, moist skins are frogs. Those that hop around on land showing off their dry, warty skins are toads. However, Anuras don't care what humans think. Some live in water and have warty skin. Others are smooth-skinned terrestrials. Actually, *all* members of the order Anura, including those tagged as "true toads," are frogs. This means, therefore, that we can refer to the whole group as *frogs* and be *toadally* correct.

There is no confusion about the importance of a frog's skin. Their lungs, for example, provide only half the oxygen they need. The rest seeps in through their skin. Even more surprising, frogs don't drink by swallowing water. Their permeable skin soaks up moisture like a sponge. It can also dry out and cause dangerous dehydration. No problem!

Full text is three pages.

Frog Background Check Questions

Use the information in the text to answer the following questions.
Use the spaces provided to enter your responses.



- _____ 1. Which of the following alternative titles would express this article's main idea as well as *Frog Background Check*?
 - (A) How Frogs Survive
 - (B) What Frogs Eat
 - (C) Interesting Frog Facts
 - (D) How To Save Frogs

- _____ 2. The author wrote: *Frogs inhabit every continent except Antarctica. They flourish in fresh-water habitats, trees, hot deserts, and extreme cold.* Based on this passage, the reader can infer that
 - (A) Frogs don't live in the ocean.
 - (B) Frogs can live inside the Arctic Circle.
 - (C) Tree frogs can live without water.
 - (D) Frogs always live near people.

3. Summarize the reason why toads can correctly be referred to as frogs?

- _____ 4. Identify the *false* statement.
 - (A) Frogs absorb oxygen through their skins.
 - (B) Frogs soak up water through their skins.
 - (C) Sometimes frogs rest in bundles as a way to keep from losing too much water.
 - (D) Frogs shed their skins by yanking it off in small pieces and eating it .

15 questions in full file. . .

Go Fly a Kite!

By Margaret Whisnant

April is National Kite Month, but why should a ho-hum, low-tech toy that doesn't do anything except flip around in the wind and then crash, if it doesn't get tangled up in a tree or power lines first, have its own month? We even tell annoying people to "Go fly a kite!" suggesting that this activity is only slightly better (or worse) than being a pest.



Surprisingly, these humble little gadgets have been significant players in some important human accomplishments!

Just exactly when, where, and why people started using kites remains a mystery, but many think they probably appeared in China more than two thousand years ago. One legend says that the first kite came to life when a Chinese farmer tied his hat to a string to keep it from blowing away in the wind. Be that as it may, the earliest written account of useful kite flying dates to about 200 BCE. A Chinese General flew a kite over the walls of a city he was trying to conquer to measure how far he would have to tunnel to get through the walls. Other ancient writing tell of kites that tested the wind, carried signals and military communications, spied on enemies, and lifted men into the air. Whether they were weapons of war or wind gauges, these early kites were definitely made of silk, another Chinese invention.

Kites spread along the ancient trade routes from China to Korea and Japan and across Asia into India and the Pacific Islands. Each culture developed a distinctive kite style and purpose for flying. In the 7th century, Japanese Buddhist monks used them to scare away evil spirits. Miniature paintings from India dating around 1500 depict young men skillfully flying kites to drop messages to sweethearts being hidden away from them. In addition to love-letter airmail, the people of India also invented the sport of kite fighting, which continues to this day in Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, Korea, and India.

Full text is 3 pages.

Go Fly a Kite! Questions

Refer to the test to answer the following questions. Write your responses in the spaces provided.



- _____ 1. Which quote from the text *best* states its main idea?
- (A) *April is National Kite Month, but why?*
 - (B) *Surprisingly, these humble little gadgets have been significant players in some important human accomplishments!*
 - (C) *Just exactly when, where, and why people started using kites remains a mystery, but many think they probably appeared in China more than two thousands years ago.*
 - (D) *And that's how a souped-up box kite became the world's first airplane.*
2. Label each of the following textual facts as supporting the *main idea* or only a *minor detail* that could have been omitted.
- _____ A. The people of ancient China used kites in military operations and to gauge the weather.
 - _____ B. Kites of ancient China were made of silk.
 - _____ C. In the 1700s, westerners began using kites for scientific research.
 - _____ D. Benjamin Franklin's 21-year-old son was with him during his famous kite experiment.
 - _____ E. An English school teacher avoided paying road taxes by riding in a carriage pulled by two kites.
 - _____ F. Alexander Graham Bell experimented with kites in an effort to invent a heavier-than-air flying machine.
 - _____ G. Lawrence Hargrave was an Australian.
 - _____ H. During World War II, kites were used as targets to help anti-aircraft gunners improve their aim.
 - _____ I. Some kites are designed for indoor flying.
 - _____ J. Kite flying is a popular recreational and competitive sport the world over.
- _____ 3. Kites were introduced to Europe by
- (A) Chinese sailors.
 - (B) invading armies from the East.
 - (C) Marco Polo and sailors who visited Japan and Malaysia.
 - (D) Europeans who traveled to the East looking for treasure.

15 questions in full file. . .

Answer Keys

Frog Background Check

1. C (RI. 6.2, 7.2, 8.2)
2. A (RI. 6.1, 7.1, 8.1)
3. Every member of the order Anura, one of three amphibian classifications, are frogs. “True toads” are recognized within a subgroup of the order Anura, which means they are frogs first and then toads. (RI. 6.2, 7.2, 8.2)
4. D (RI. 6.1, 7.1, 8.1)
5. B (RI. 6.5, 7.5, 8.5)
6. These frogs have the ability to freeze solid like a popsicle and survive. (RI. 6.4, 7.4, 8.4)

Full answers included in complete file.