



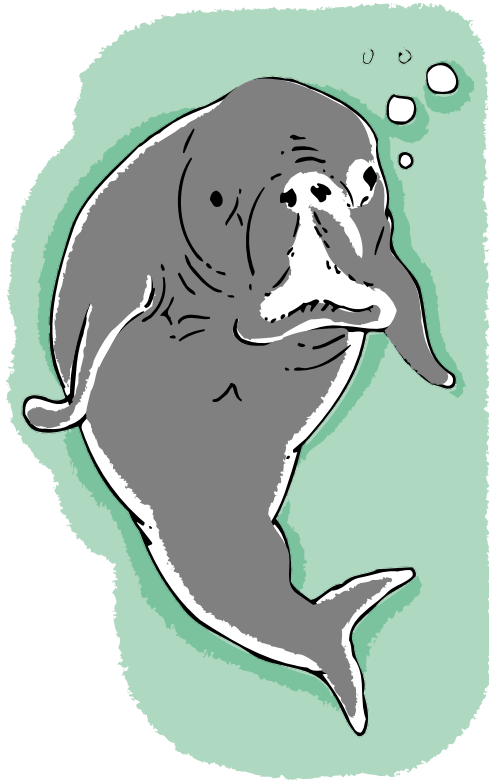
This is a story about a gentle animal that was thought to be half woman and half fish.



Surprising Giants

Long ago, manatees may have lived on land. Their cousins were the big elephants. Now manatees live in the sea or in rivers. But they are still like land animals. They need air.

Manatees are big and fat. They move along slowly in the water. Their two front arms are flat. These arms look like the paddles we use to row a boat. The manatees have no back legs. But their big tail is wide and flat.



Manatees eat plants. Some grass grows where the water is not too deep. Manatees like to eat this. Sometimes they reach out of the water and eat branches on trees. They also eat grass on banks near the water.

A manatee eats in two parts. First, it breaks plants into small pieces with the front of its mouth. Then, with the teeth in the back of its mouth, it turns the plants into even smaller pieces. A manatee is a hungry animal. It eats nearly 60 pounds of plants a day.

People have told strange stories about manatees for a long time. Manatees hug their babies with their flat arms, almost like people. Sailors saw this. They thought that manatees were half woman and half fish. The sailors made up a name for these surprising animals. They called them *mermaids*. So when you hear a story about a mermaid, think of the manatee.



Understanding the Story

Here are some questions about the story that you just read. Read each one. Then fill in the circle beside the best answer. If you are not sure, go back and look at the story again.

- 1. You would find a manatee in a
 - Ⓐ tree
 - Ⓑ mountain
 - Ⓒ river
 - Ⓓ forest

- ★ 2. If manatees and elephants were cousins, they were
 - Ⓔ best friends
 - Ⓕ part of the same animal family
 - Ⓖ alike in every way
 - Ⓗ very strange

- 3. Which of these sentences is true?
 - Ⓐ Manatees are thin animals.
 - Ⓑ Manatees move slowly.
 - Ⓒ Manatees have big back legs.
 - Ⓓ Manatees have tiny tails.

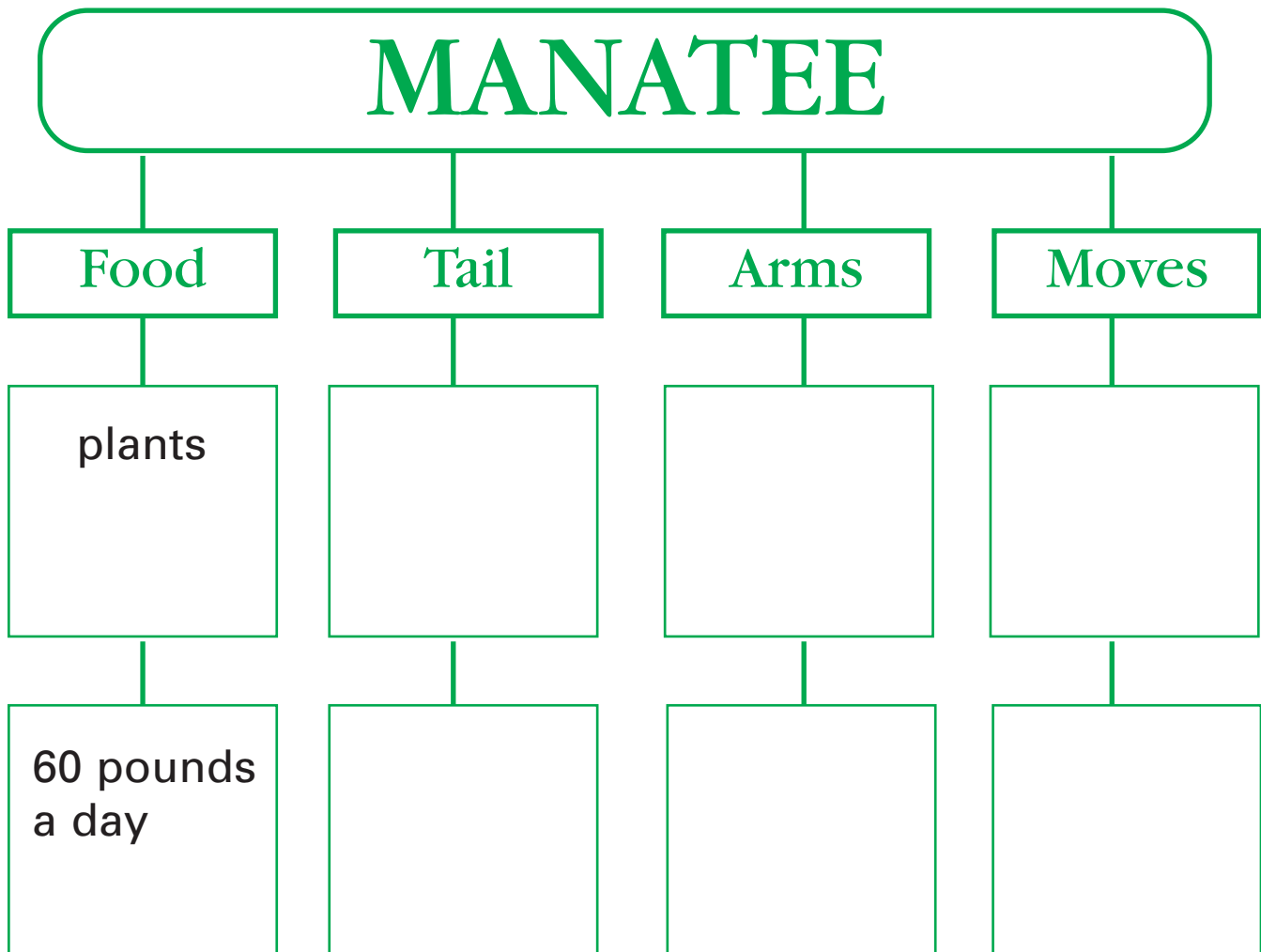
- 4. The manatee eats
- Ⓔ fruit on trees
 - Ⓕ flowers in the garden
 - Ⓖ little fish in the pond
 - Ⓗ plants in the water
- ★ 5. The arms of manatees are like paddles probably so that they can
- Ⓐ swim more easily in the water
 - Ⓑ catch fish more easily
 - Ⓒ hug their babies
 - Ⓓ break plants into small pieces
- 6. Sailors thought that manatees were half woman because
- Ⓔ they looked so beautiful
 - Ⓕ they swam so well
 - Ⓖ they hugged their babies
 - Ⓗ they had long hair
- ★ 7. A mermaid was probably
- Ⓐ a giant squid
 - Ⓑ a woman
 - Ⓒ a baby
 - Ⓓ a manatee



Summing Up

What did you learn about the manatee? The chart below will help you sort information about the manatee. Look at the box that says **Food**. There are two other boxes under it. One tells you more about the food the manatee eats. The other tells you that the manatee eats 60 pounds of plants every day.

Fill in the other boxes to tell about the manatee's tail and arms, and the way it moves.





Note to the Writer

You should try to make your writing interesting. One way to do this is to tell about the facts you know.

Suppose you want to write about the manatee. You might write a sentence like the one below.

The manatee eats plants.

This sentence tells something about manatees. But it does not tell a lot. You could make the sentence more interesting by adding more facts. Read the sentence below.

The manatee eats 60 pounds of plants each day.

Now the person who reads your sentence knows something special about manatees.



Try This

The words you have on the chart on page 15 can help you write interesting sentences about the manatee. On the next page are some sentences that tell about the manatee. Use the words on the chart to help you make the sentences more interesting. Write your new sentences on the lines

1. A manatee has a tail.

2. A manatee has two arms.

3. Manatees move in the water.

