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This story is about the biggest snake on Earth. Read the story. Then answer the questions that follow.



Big, Long, and Strong

How big can a snake get? How about 24 feet long! That's as long as two cars in a row. This big, long, and strong snake is the python. A python can weigh more than 300 pounds.

Pythons are a type of snake called a "constrictor." That means it can wrap itself around another animal. The animal suffocates and dies. Then the python unhinges its jaw. It swallows the animal whole.

Pythons can be found in Africa, Asia, and Australia. They like very warm climates. They need to be near water. They are good swimmers. They lie in water near the shore. Pythons eat small animals such as birds and lizards. When a small animal comes along, the python grabs it. They also eat large animals such as pigs and antelopes. The snakes can see and smell well. But they also can sense the heat from an animal. This makes it easy to find animals at night. They can find animals that hide in plants and leaves.



A female python lays its eggs in a shallow nest. She covers the eggs with dirt and leaves. Then she wraps around the eggs to keep them warm. If it gets cold, the female “shivers.” Her movement keeps the eggs warm. Baby pythons hatch after about three months.

Pythons must be careful in the wild. They are good food for eagles, lions, and leopards. The snakes cannot move quickly enough to get away. They can go only one mile per hour. They travel in a straight line. Zoos are safe places for pythons. Some of these snakes can live to be 25 years old in a zoo.



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. Why do you think pythons like to hide in the water to catch animals to eat?

- (A) They are lazy.
- (B) They eat only fish and eels.
- (C) They can't live out of the water.
- (D) They can't chase animals on the ground for a long time.

Critical Reasoning

2. A python can be as long as

- (A) two cars
- (B) a skateboard
- (C) a horse
- (D) a basketball court

Factual

3. Pythons can find other animals in the dark because

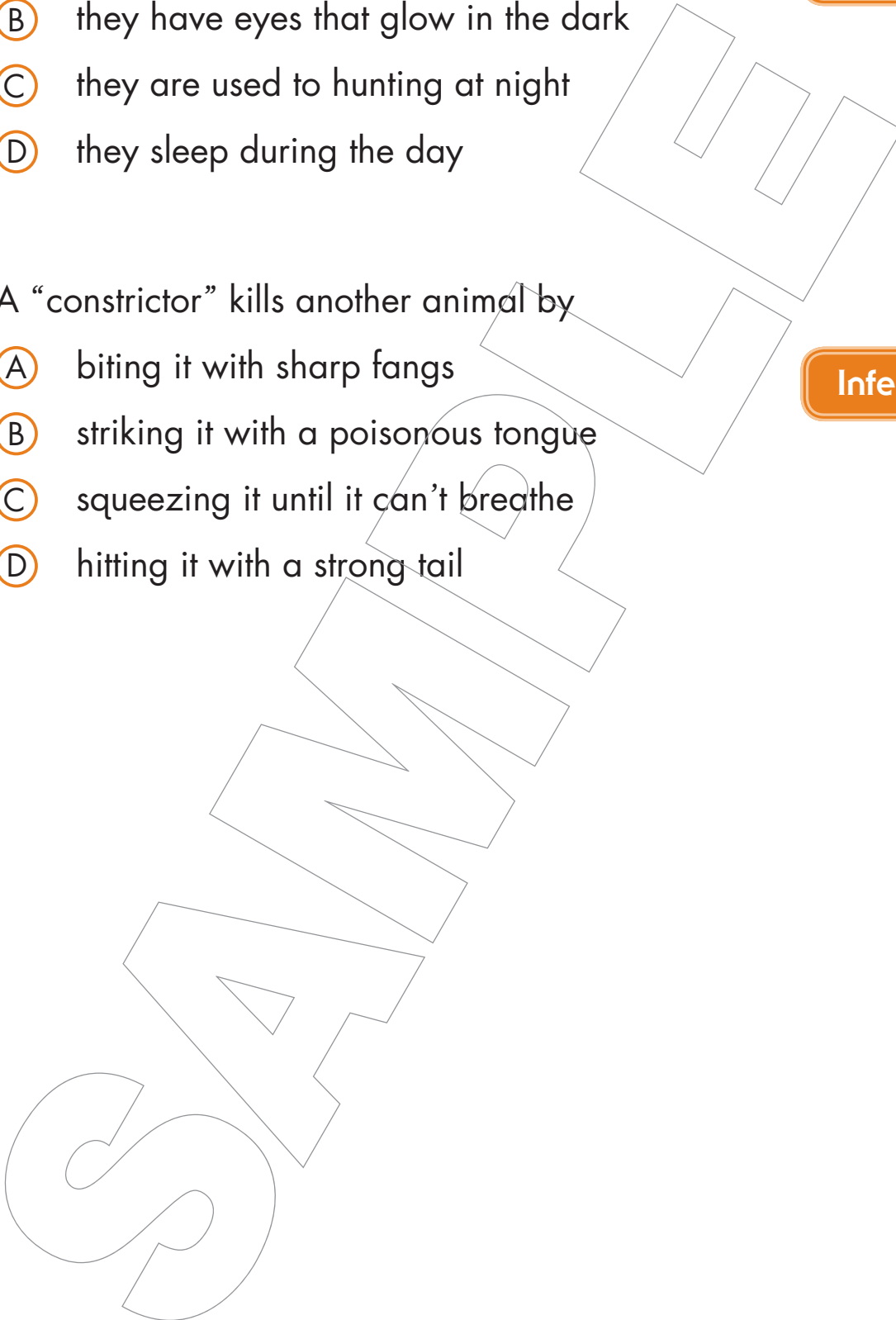
- (A) they can sense their body heat
- (B) they have eyes that glow in the dark
- (C) they are used to hunting at night
- (D) they sleep during the day

Inference

4. A “constrictor” kills another animal by

- (A) biting it with sharp fangs
- (B) striking it with a poisonous tongue
- (C) squeezing it until it can't breathe
- (D) hitting it with a strong tail

Inference



5. The python eats its food by

- Ⓐ swallowing it whole
- Ⓑ taking many small bites
- Ⓒ chewing it into fine pieces
- Ⓓ tearing it into pieces and swallowing them

Factual

6. Why does the mother python “shiver” when she wraps around her eggs?

- Ⓐ The movement lets the young snakes inside the eggs know she is there.
- Ⓑ The movement creates heat that keeps the eggs warm.
- Ⓒ The eggs need to feel the movement in order to grow.
- Ⓓ The mother python gets cold staying with the eggs.

Inference






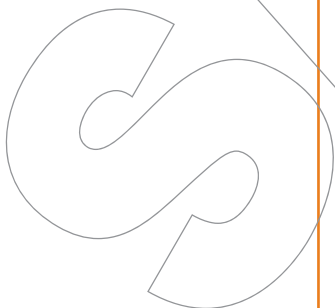
Summing Up



The story gave you a lot of information about pythons. Think about what you have learned. Now write some facts about pythons in the chart below. What did you know before? What made you say “Wow”? What questions do you still have about pythons?



		
What did you know before you read the story?	What made you say “Wow!”?	What else would you like to know?





Write About It

Letters are a good way to share news with a friend. You can tell about something you have seen or done. You can tell about something that has happened to you. When you write, you tell your friend what you know. You also want to include some information that will make your friend say, “Wow!”

Practice your letter writing now. Imagine you were on a trip to Africa to take pictures of wildlife. On your trip, you saw a big python near a river. You watched the python for a long time. Describe what you saw in a letter to a friend below. Share your questions about pythons with your friend in the letter.

Dear _____,

I was walking near a river on my African trip when _____

_____. It was _____

_____. The python looked very

hungry. First, it _____.

Next, it _____.

Finally, the python _____.

I still have many questions about the python. _____.

Your friend,
