

## BALLOON-POPPING DOG!



### ■ Read the passage.

**Fastest Time to Pop 100 Balloons by a Dog,  
February 24, 2008**

Some dogs do not like loud noises, like popping a balloon. But, Anastasia just loves that sound! Her owner first noticed Anastasia's special talent at a New Year's Eve party. When all of the balloons appeared, Anastasia thought it was a game. She wanted to pop as many as she could. Now, she holds the world record!

Her first balloon contest in 2005 involved **helium** balloons. Anastasia, a Jack Russell terrier, was one of 10 finalists in that contest. Now, she bites standard party balloons attached to the ground. Each one is inflated with air and measures 8 inches (20.3 cm) across. Her world record is 100 popped balloons in 44.49 seconds.

Anastasia appeared on TV in dog food and department store commercials before her record-breaking days. Since then, she has shown her skills on several TV shows. In fact, Anastasia actually broke her old world record of 53.7 seconds on a national morning TV show. Her trainer said that Anastasia really gets excited when a blimp flies over the backyard!

### DID YOU KNOW?

Jack Russell terriers are intelligent, athletic, and fearless dogs. They are known to bark loudly and were first used to hunt out foxes, badgers, and groundhogs. Jack Russell terriers are fun-loving dogs that can entertain themselves.

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



■ **Answer the questions.**

1. Anastasia's owner discovered that her dog had a special talent at a \_\_\_\_\_

2. Anastasia pops balloons by

- A. sitting on them.
- B. using her toenails.
- C. biting them.

3. What kinds of TV experiences has Anastasia had?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



4. What characteristics of Jack Russell terriers might make them good balloon poppers?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Why might **helium**-filled balloons be more difficult to use when breaking a world record?

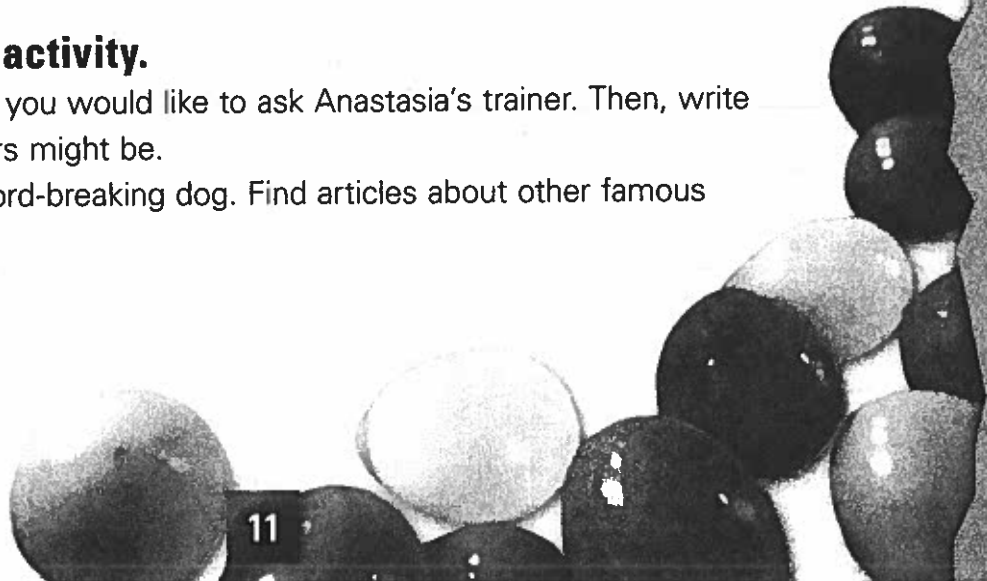
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6. Why do you think Anastasia gets excited when a blimp flies by?

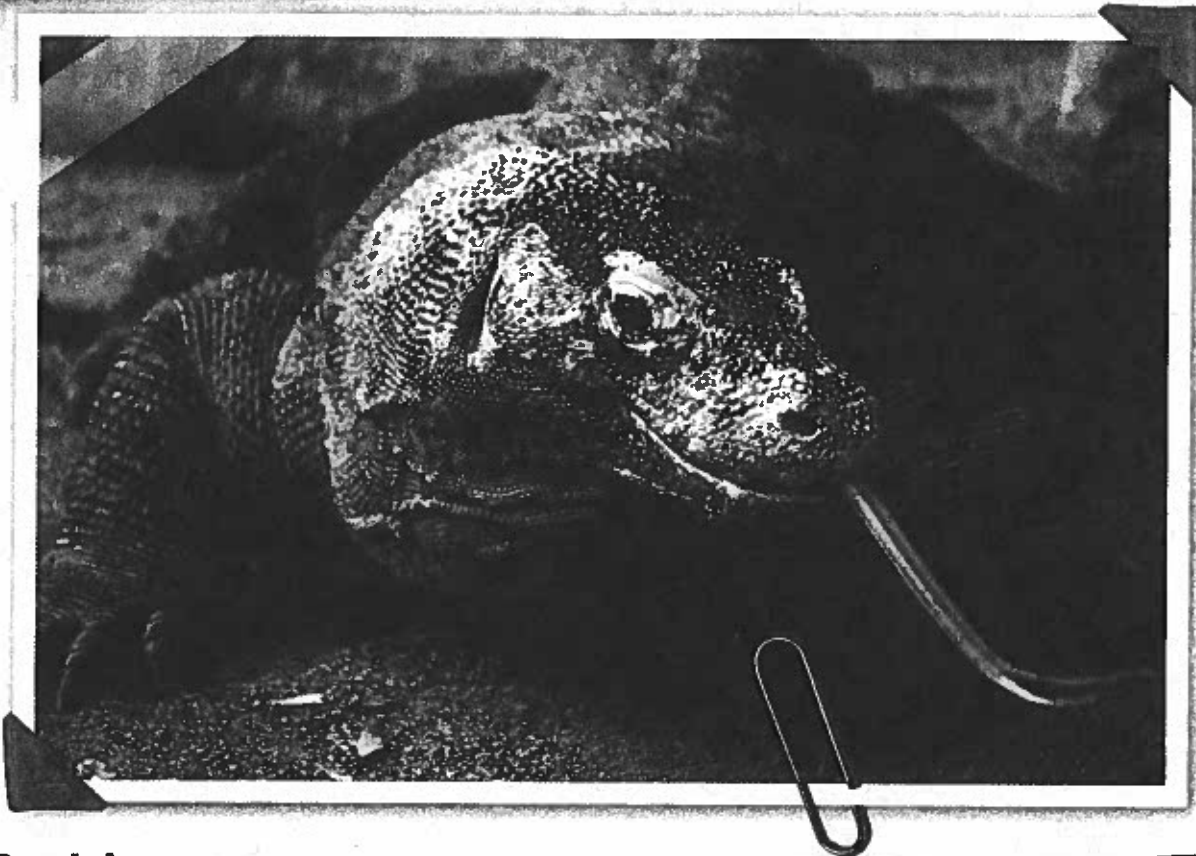
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■ **Choose one extension activity.**

- A. Write three questions that you would like to ask Anastasia's trainer. Then, write what you think her answers might be.
- B. Anastasia is a famous record-breaking dog. Find articles about other famous dogs in history.



## DRAGONS: FACT, NOT FICTION

**Read the passage.**  
**Largest Lizard**

When you hear of dragons, you may think of fictional tales about beasts that breathe fire. But, did you know that a lizard called a Komodo dragon exists that is just as fierce? Komodo dragons are also called Komodo monitors or ora. They live on the southeastern islands of Indonesia. By weight, Komodo dragons are the world's Largest Lizards. These lizards have been alive for millions of years, but their existence has been a mystery until about 100 years ago.

The Komodo's teeth are often compared to those of a shark. A Komodo has about 60 teeth, which are broken and replaced frequently. This keeps the teeth sharp enough to cut chunks out of its prey. The dragons use their **sharp** sense of smell to find prey. These fast-moving animals can climb trees and swim to catch something to eat.

Komodo dragons also are **scavengers** and eat the bodies of dead animals. They can eat up to 80 percent of their body weight in one meal. If you weighed 100 pounds (45.4 kg), that would mean you would have to eat an 80-pound (36-kg) hamburger to keep up with this dragon!

**DID YOU KNOW?**

The saliva in the Komodo dragon's mouth has over 50 kinds of bacteria. Most animals that escape die of blood poisoning within 24 hours of the bite. Scientists are studying this saliva to see if it can help control diseases in the future.

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



■ **Answer the questions.**

1. Komodo dragons are also known by what two names?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Circle *T* for true or *F* for false.

A. People have known about Komodo dragons for millions of years.      T      F

B. A Komodo dragon's saliva contains no bacteria.      T      F

3. In what way are Komodo dragons and sharks alike?

- A. They can both climb trees.
- B. They both use gills to breathe.
- C. They both have teeth that are replaced often.

4. Which definition best describes **sharp** as it is used in "their sharp sense of smell"?

- A. pointed
- B. strong
- C. sudden

5. Name other animals that are examples of **scavengers**.

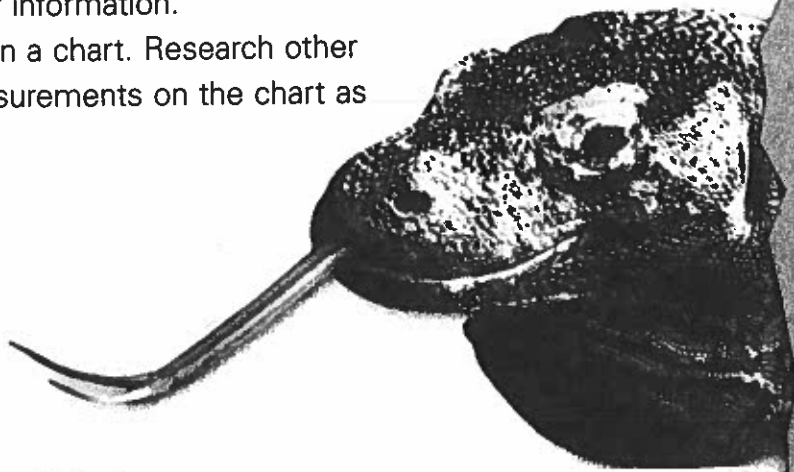
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6. From this passage, you can conclude that Komodo dragons are

- A. dangerous animals.
- B. slow, lazy creatures.
- C. related to dinosaurs.

■ **Choose one extension activity.**

- A. Research dragons from various legends. Compare and contrast them with Komodo dragons. Create a poster to display your information.
- B. Show the length of a Komodo dragon on a chart. Research other animals of interest and graph their measurements on the chart as a comparison.





# NEPTUNE'S TINY HERD

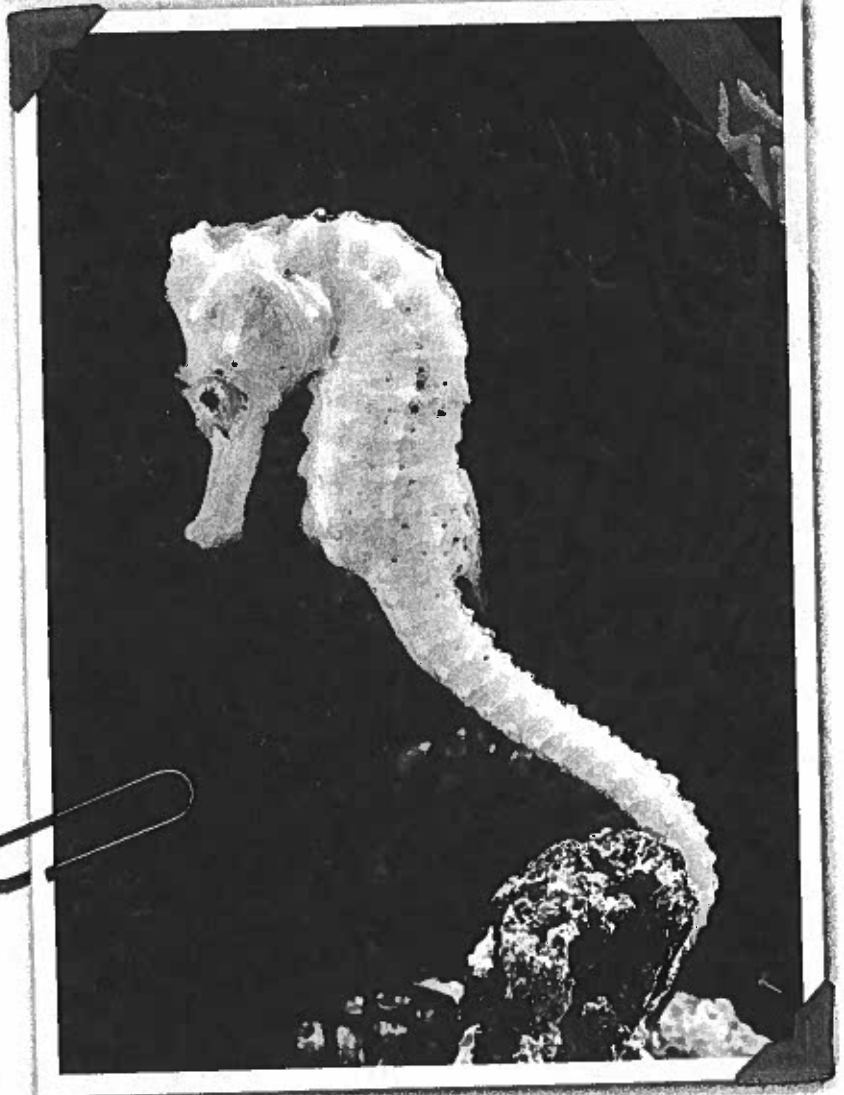
## ■ Read the passage. Slowest Fish

Mysterious sea creatures have always captured people's imaginations. Children's books are full of stories about mermaids and sea horses. Unlike mermaids, however, sea horses are real. Sea horses may have heads like horses, but they also have front pouches like kangaroos and tails like monkeys. They aren't really horses at all. Sea horses actually are extremely unusual fish.

More than 30 different kinds of sea horses exist. They live in warm ocean waters all over the world. They can range in size from one-fourth of an inch (0.6 cm) to one foot (30 cm) long. Sea horses come in many colors. Some even use **camouflage** to hide from their enemies.

Sea horses are unusual because they mate for life. They are one of few fish species in which the male gives birth to the young. Male sea horses carry their babies in kangaroo-like pouches on their bellies. Babies are born as fully formed tiny sea horses. They immediately begin swimming in the ocean.

Due to their body structure, sea horses swim upright. This makes them the Slowest Fish in the ocean. They cannot swim fast because they have only their **dorsal** fins on their backs to move them forward. This fin can only flutter about 35 times per second. A sea horse uses the two smaller fins on either side of its head to steer. These are called pectoral fins. They use their prehensile tails to hold on to coral or seaweed. This prevents them from being swept away by ocean currents. Their long snouts suck in plankton like a straw.



### DID YOU KNOW?

In ancient Rome, many believed Neptune, the god of the ocean, used large sea horses to pull his chariot. When fishermen saw the tiny creatures in the sea, they were fascinated by them. They thought that these fish were related to Neptune's horses.

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



■ **Answer the questions.**

1. Circle *T* for true or *F* for false.

A. Mermaids are real creatures.

T F

B. A sea horse uses its snout like a straw to suck in plankton.

T F

2. About how many varieties of sea horses exist?

A. 50

B. 25

C. 30

3. An animal that uses **camouflage** for defense

A. hides behind large objects.

B. blends in with its surroundings.

C. shows its teeth or claws.

4. Identify one way that sea horses are like other fish.

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5. The author describes sea horses as "unusual." In what ways are sea horses unusual?

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6. What is the difference between **dorsal** fins and pectoral fins?

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■ **Choose one extension activity.**

A. Design a machine that could help sea horses swim faster. Share your invention with your classmates.

B. Research the different types of sea horses and the oceans in which they live. Create a map that displays the location of each species.

