

Academic and Domain-Specific Vocabulary in Nonfiction

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

Nonfiction texts often use special science or history words. Look for definitions, examples, or pictures near the word, and check how the word is used in the sentence to figure out its meaning.

PART 1 — READ

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

The Giant Pandas of China

Giant pandas are large black-and-white bears that live in the misty mountain forests of central China. Although their thick fur and round bodies make them look soft and lazy, pandas are powerful climbers and can swim across rivers. Scientists describe them as a flagship species, meaning they are an animal that helps people care about protecting the wider habitat where they live.

Pandas are unusual among bears because they are nearly herbivores—animals that eat plants. About ninety-nine percent of a panda's diet is bamboo, a tall woody grass. To get enough energy, an adult panda must eat between twenty and forty pounds of bamboo each day, which can take twelve hours. Pandas have a special wrist bone that works like a thumb. This adaptation lets them grip stalks of bamboo while they chew.

Because pandas depend so completely on bamboo, they are vulnerable when forests are cut down. Vulnerable means "easily harmed." If a bamboo forest disappears, a panda cannot simply move to a new food source. In the 1980s, scientists warned that fewer than one thousand pandas remained in the wild. Since then, the Chinese government has set aside dozens of nature reserves—protected areas where logging is not allowed—and the panda population has slowly climbed. Today, the species is no longer listed as "endangered" but it is still called "vulnerable." Conservation, which means the careful protection of plants and animals, is an ongoing effort.

PART 2 — PRACTICE

Use the article to answer each question. Pay close attention to how special words are used.

1. In paragraph 2, what does the word herbivores mean?
 - A. Animals that eat plants
 - B. Animals that eat both plants and meat
 - C. Animals that hunt other animals for food
 - D. Animals that live in cold weather



2. What is bamboo, according to the article?
 - A. A type of fruit tree
 - B. A small flowering bush
 - C. A tall woody grass
 - D. A young bamboo shoot eaten by pandas
3. What does the word adaptation mean in this article?
 - A. A young animal that is being raised
 - B. A body feature that helps an animal survive
 - C. A change in the weather across seasons
 - D. A choice an animal makes each day
4. What does the article mean by calling pandas a flagship species?
 - A. A panda is the largest animal in the forest where it lives.
 - B. A panda is an animal that lives only in one country.
 - C. A panda is the most dangerous animal in its habitat.
 - D. A panda is an animal that helps people care about protecting its habitat.
5. Based on the article, what does habitat mean?
 - A. A regular habit or daily routine
 - B. A food that an animal eats often
 - C. A cage or enclosure built by people
 - D. The place where an animal naturally lives
6. Which sentence from the article BEST helps a reader figure out the meaning of vulnerable?
 - A. "Pandas are powerful climbers and can swim across rivers."
 - B. "An adult panda must eat between twenty and forty pounds of bamboo each day."
 - C. "Vulnerable means easily harmed."
 - D. "Scientists describe them as a flagship species."
7. What is a nature reserve, based on the article?
 - A. A small zoo where pandas are bred
 - B. A protected area where logging is not allowed
 - C. A backup supply of bamboo kept for winter
 - D. A library of books about wildlife
8. What does the word conservation mean in the last paragraph?
 - A. A long talk between two people
 - B. A type of museum exhibit about animals
 - C. The protection of an old building
 - D. The careful protection of plants and animals



9. Use context clues to explain what an endangered species probably is. Use evidence from the text.

10. Which TWO words from the article are domain-specific words from science?

- A. herbivores and adaptation
- B. forests and rivers
- C. lazy and round
- D. thumb and wrist



Answer Keys

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D

- 6 A B C D
- 7 A B C D
- 8 A B C D
- 9
- 10 A B C D

Explanations

1. A	The text defines herbivores in the same sentence. B is the meaning of "omnivore" (often confused with herbivore). C is the meaning of "carnivore" or "predator." D is a real-world fact about some animals but not the meaning of this word.
2. C	Paragraph 2 says "a tall woody grass." A is plausible because bamboo is tall like a tree. B confuses bamboo with a different plant. D is a thing made of bamboo (a shoot), not the definition of bamboo itself — a classic vocabulary trap.
3. B	The wrist bone is described as helping pandas grip bamboo — a survival feature. A is a different word ("offspring"). C is the meaning of "climate change," not adaptation. D confuses adaptation (built-in body feature) with a daily decision.
4. D	The text defines flagship species directly. A confuses "flagship" (leading symbol) with "largest." B is a true fact about pandas but not the word's meaning. C is a surface trap — "flagship" sounds bold, but it does not mean "dangerous."
5. D	The article uses habitat to mean the mountain forests where pandas live naturally. A is a vocabulary trap because "habit" looks similar to "habitat" but means a routine. C confuses habitat (natural home) with a zoo enclosure. B confuses habitat with diet.
6. C	The author defines vulnerable directly. A describes panda strength, the OPPOSITE feeling. B is about food amounts. D defines a different word, flagship species.
7. B	The text defines it directly. A confuses a reserve with a zoo. C plays on the word "reserve" meaning "a supply set aside." D plays on the same word meaning "a place to read or rest."
8. D	The author defines conservation directly. A is a vocabulary trap — "conversation" looks almost the same word. B and C are real meanings of "conservation" in other contexts (art conservation, building conservation) but not how it is used here.
9.	Answer: Sample answers: (1) Endangered must mean an animal that is in serious danger of disappearing. The text says pandas USED to be called "endangered" when fewer than one thousand were left, but now there are more, so they are only "vulnerable." That shows "endangered" is more serious than "vulnerable." (2) An endangered species is one whose numbers are so low it could die out completely if nothing is done — the panda example shows this. NOT acceptable: defining "endangered" as simply "in danger" without using the panda numbers, or saying it means the same thing as "vulnerable." Strong answers use the contrast between "endangered" and "vulnerable" PLUS the low panda numbers to show that endangered is more serious. Reject answers that treat the two words as identical or that ignore the text.
10. A	Herbivores and adaptation are biology terms a textbook would define. B are general nature words. C are everyday describing words. D are body-part words anyone uses, not specialized science terms.



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