

**The following content will be used for items 1 - 6.**

**Here is a story about life on the Dakota frontier. Read the story. Then answer the questions.**

## **Dakota Dugout**

by Ann Turner

Tell you about the prairie years? I'll tell you, child, how it was.

When Matt wrote, "Come!" I packed all I had, cups and pots and dresses and rope, even Grandma's silver boot hook, and rode the clickety train to a cave in the earth, Matt's cave.

Built from sod, you know, with a special iron plow that sliced the long earth strips. Matt cut them into bricks, laid them up, dug into a hill that was our first home. I cried when I saw it.

No sky came into that room, only a paper window that made the sun look greasy. Dirt fell on our bed, snakes sometimes, too, and the buffalo hide door could not keep out the wind or the empty cries in the long grass.

The birds visited me, there was no one else, with Matt all day in the fields. A hawk came, snake in its claws, a heron flapped by with wings like sails, and a sparrow jabbered the day long on a gray fence post. I jabbered back.

Winter came sudden. Slam-bang! the ground was iron, cattle breath turned to ice, froze their noses to the ground. We lost twelve in a storm and the wind scoured the dugout, whish-hush, whish-hush.

Spring, child, was teasing slow then quick, water booming in the lake, geese like yarn in the sky, green spreading faster than fire, and the wind blowing shoosh-hush, shoosh-hush.

First summer we watched the corn grow, strode around the field clapping hands. We saw dresses, buggies, gold in that grain until one day a hot wind baked it dry as an oven, ssst-ssst, ssst-ssst.

Matt sat and looked two whole days, silent and long.

Come fall we snuggled like beavers in our burrow, new grass on the floor, willows our roof under the earth. I pasted newspaper on the walls, set bread to bake on the coals, and the wind was quiet.

Corn grew finally, we got our dresses, buggies, some gold, built a clapboard house with windows like suns, floors I slipped on, and the empty sound of too many rooms. Didn't think I'd miss the taste of earth in the air. Now the broom went whisp-hush and the clock ticked like a busy heart.

Talking brings it near again, the sweet taste of new bread in a Dakota dugout, how the grass whispered like an old friend, how the earth kept us warm. Sometimes the things we start with are best.

*Dakota Dugout by Ann Turner, text copyright © 1985 by Ann Turner. Published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division.*

**The following content will be used for items 7 - 8.**

**Read the passage. Then answer the questions that follow.**

## **African Animals**

### Forests

In Africa forests are found in the warm, tropical western and central regions, on the edges of the cooler highland plains, and in the mountains.

Insects, birds, snakes, squirrels, monkeys, apes, and many other kinds of animals find food and shelter in the forest. Tall trees provide safe places for the animals to make nests, and leafy branches shade them from the hot sun.

Some animals prefer the treetops, while others inhabit the lower branches or the forest floor. One tree may be home for many kinds of animals.

### Gorillas

Gorillas live both in lowland forests and on wooded mountain slopes. These primates are the largest of all apes and may weigh up to six hundred pounds. Some other primates that live in Africa are chimpanzees, monkeys, and baboons.

Gorillas are gentle animals that spend most of each day searching the forest for leaves and fruit. Although the males sometimes look and act fierce, they rarely attack other animals unless they are threatened.

When night falls, each gorilla makes itself a leafy nest. A gorilla usually sleeps on the ground or in the lower branches of a tree. How would you like to sleep in a tree at night?

### Leopards

The leopard is a powerful large cat that lives in woodlands at the edge of the African plains. This fearsome predator can see well in the dark and hunts mostly at night. It is an excellent climber and often leaps onto its prey from branches or rocks. It also hunts tree-dwelling animals like monkeys and birds.

When a leopard is stalking prey, its rosette-shaped spots help it hide in the shadows.

### Snakes

The African forest is home to many species of snakes. They range in size from tiny vipers no thicker than your finger to pythons more than fifteen feet long.

Some snakes climb trees to hunt for birds and insects. They use their scaly bodies to grip the branches. Other snakes live on the ground, where they hunt rodents and other small animals. Because snakes have thin bodies, they can easily crawl into holes both to look for prey and to escape from animals that prey on them.

"Forests," "Gorillas," "Leopards," and "Snakes" from *African Animals* by Caroline Arnold, copyright © 1997 by Caroline Arnold. Published by HarperCollins Publishers. Used by permission.