

Reading Comprehension — The Kangaroo

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The Kangaroo

The kangaroo is one of the most famous animals in the world, and a proud symbol of Australia. With its powerful back legs, long thick tail and the pouch on the female's belly, it is unlike almost any other animal on Earth.

Kangaroos belong to a group of animals called marsupials. This means the female carries her baby, called a joey, in a pouch. A newborn joey is astonishingly tiny — about the size of a jellybean. It crawls into the pouch and stays there for months, drinking milk and growing, until it is big enough to hop about on its own.

Kangaroos are built for the hot, dry Australian landscape. Instead of running, they hop, using their huge back legs and tail like a giant spring. This lets them travel long distances using very little energy, and a large kangaroo can leap several metres in a single bound. Their tail also works like a fifth leg, helping them balance.

Kangaroos are herbivores, which means they eat only plants, mostly grass. They often rest in the shade during the hottest part of the day and feed in the cooler evening. They live in groups called mobs, which help keep them safe.

For tens of thousands of years, the kangaroo has been important to Aboriginal peoples, and today it appears on Australia's coat of arms — a lasting symbol of the country.

Questions

1. What group of animals does the kangaroo belong to? (1 mark)
2. What is a baby kangaroo called? (1 mark)
3. How big is a newborn joey? (1 mark)
4. Find and copy a word in paragraph 4 meaning "an animal that eats only plants." (1 mark)
5. How does hopping help the kangaroo survive in Australia? (2 marks)
6. Why do kangaroos rest in the shade during the day? (2 marks)
7. What is a group of kangaroos called, and why do they live in groups? (2 marks)
8. Summarise three facts about how a joey grows up. (3 marks)

Answer Key / Mark Scheme

1. Marsupials.
2. A joey.
3. About the size of a jellybean.
4. "herbivores."

- 5.** Hopping lets them travel long distances using very little energy, useful in the hot, dry land.
- 6.** To stay cool during the hottest part of the day; they feed in the cooler evening.
- 7.** A mob; living in groups helps keep them safe.
- 8.** Any three: born tiny (jellybean-sized); crawls into the pouch; drinks milk and grows for months; stays until big enough to hop out.