

Name: _____

Monster Lizard

by Guy Belleranti

Do you believe dragons are real? Nobody's discovered a fire-breathing dragon like the kind you've read about in storybooks. However, dragons are not entirely fictitious. North of Australia on several Indonesian islands lives the most dragon-like beast you'll ever find. This animal is the Komodo dragon.



The Komodo dragon is the world's largest lizard. Adults typically grow to nearly 8 feet in length and weigh in at 150 to 200 pounds. A few males have even

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Often the Komodo dragon just eats something already dead, helping to clean up its hot grassland or tropical rainforest habitat in the process.

When there aren't any dead animals laying around, it hunts live prey. The Komodo dragon is a good swimmer and can also run as fast as a dog for short distances. However, it usually just waits in the brush for prey to come near. Its brown to dark gray color helps provide camouflage.

The dragon cannot bite as hard as a crocodile, but it makes up for this by tearing into its prey with 60 serrated, shark-like teeth. It doesn't chew its food. Instead the beast stretches its flexible jaws like a snake and swallows large chunks of meat whole.

The Komodo dragon has other weapons as well - poisonous bacteria in its mouth, and according to recent studies, deadly venom. So even if the bitten prey does escape, it

doesn't get far. The dragon follows the animal's scent with its long forked tongue and waits for it to die.

So what kind of animals are a Komodo dragon's prey? Sometimes they'll hunt small creatures like rodents and snakes. Other times they'll hunt large animals like goats, deer, boars, water buffalo, and even horses. In fact, the Komodo dragon is the only lizard that will attack and eat something bigger than itself.

Adult dragons will even eat young dragons. That's why the young live in trees for their first four years of life. It's the only place the too heavy adults can't catch them. While in the trees the young dragons eat small lizards, insects, and bird eggs.

Today, the Komodo dragon is an endangered species because of habitat loss and hunting. However, they are also being protected. One of their main island habitats, Komodo Island, has even been turned into an Indonesian National Park to help preserve this amazing lizard.



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Guy Bellerar

comes from his experiences working with animals and teaching others.

his article

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1. Tell whether each Komodo dragon fact is true or false. Write T or F on each line.

_____ Komodo dragons can breathe fire.

_____ Wild Komodo dragons can be found in North America.

_____ A hungry Komodo dragon can eat a horse.

_____ In addition to eating animals, Komodo dragons will eat leaves, twigs, and fruits.

_____ The Komodo dragon can swim.

2. Why do young Komodo dragons live in trees?



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3. List two

4. According to the article, what large animals does a Komodo dragon eat?

5. If a 200-pound Komodo dragon eats 80% of it's body weight in one meal, what is the weight of the meal?

answer: _____

Explain how you calculated your answer. _____

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

_____ 1. fictitious

a. found for the first time

_____ 2. munching

b. having a jagged edge

_____ 3. cliff



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g area

_____ 4. sharp

_____ 5. forked

e. something with tines or prongs, like a fork

_____ 6. island

f. made-up; imaginary

_____ 7. discovered

g. chewing; eating

_____ 8. beast

h. area of land surrounded by water

◆ **Now try this:** Find vocabulary words in the article and highlight them.

ANSWER KEY

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1. Tell whether each Komodo dragon fact is true or false. Write T or F on each line.

- F** Komodo dragons can breathe fire.
- F** Wild Komodo dragons can be found in North America.
- T** A hungry Komodo dragon can eat a horse.
- F** In addition to eating animals, Komodo dragons will eat leaves, twigs, and fruits.
- T** The Komodo dragon can swim.

2. Why c

Beca

A cartoon illustration of a superhero character with brown hair, wearing a red suit with a blue cape and a blue chest emblem. He is flying through the air, holding a green gift box with a red ribbon. The background is white.

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3. List tw

habits

4. According to the article, what large animals does a Komodo dragon eat?

goats, deer, boars, water buffalo, and horses

5. If a 200-pound Komodo dragon eats 80% of it's body weight in one meal, what is the weight of the meal?

answer: **160 pounds**

Explain how you calculated your answer. **The article states that 80% of 100 pounds is 80 pounds. Multiply the 80 pounds by 2 to find 80% of 200 pounds.**

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