Wolverine: The Skunk Bear

by Guy Belleranti

Do you know what a skunk bear is? No, it's not a bear that smells bad. It's not a bear at all. It's a nickname for the wolverine.

Wolverines are the second largest member of the weasel family. Other animals in this family include badgers, ferrets, minks, ermines, martins and otters, including the family's largest member, the giant otter.

But why is the wolverine nicknamed the "skunk



bear"? Well, its short-legged, thick, muscular body makes it look a bit like a small bear. And often it

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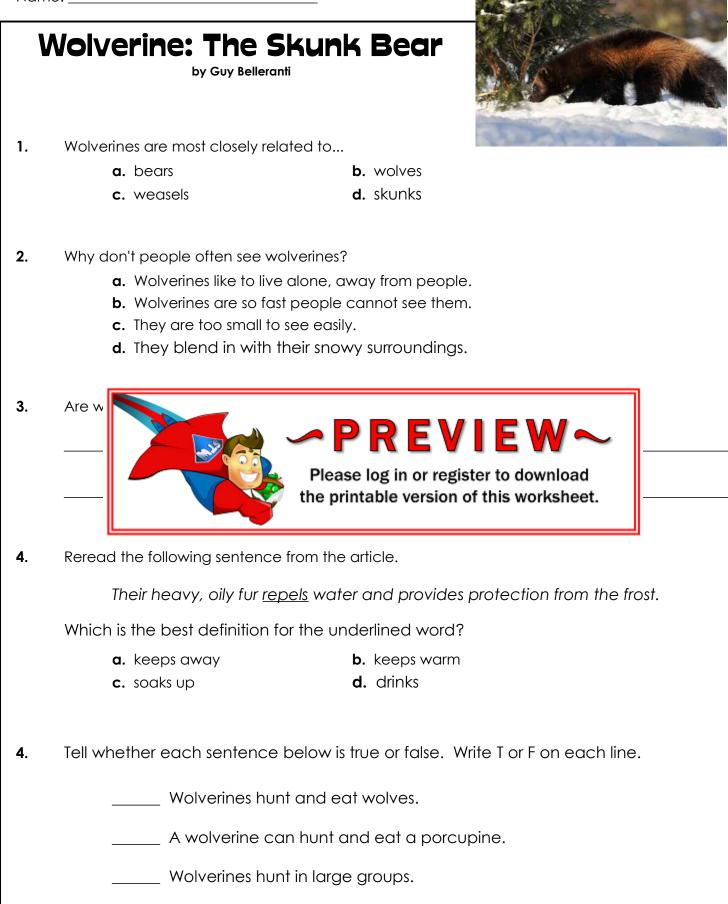
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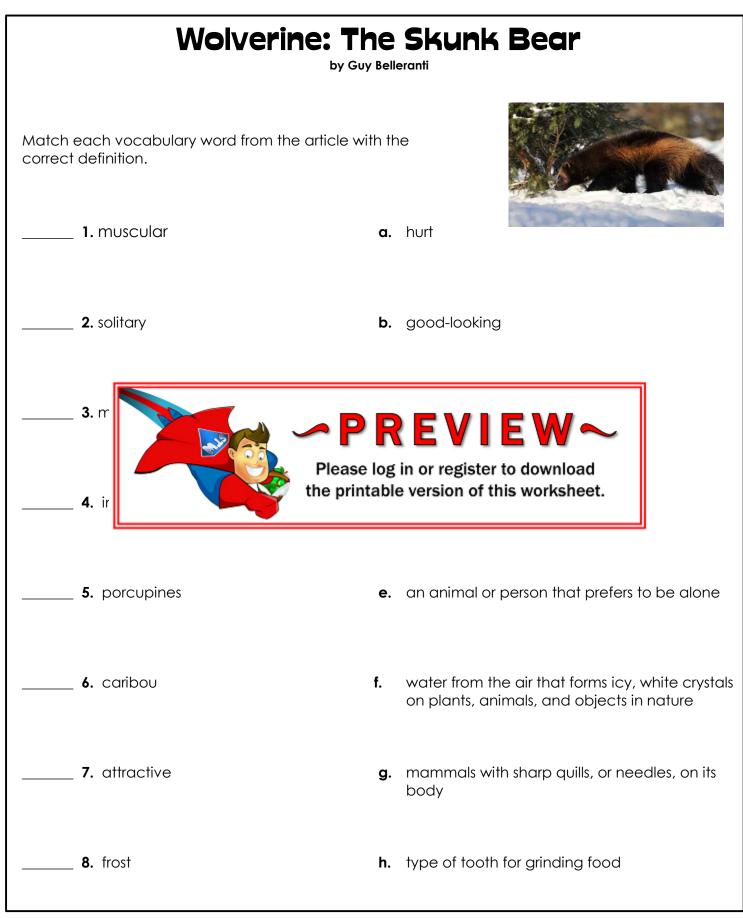
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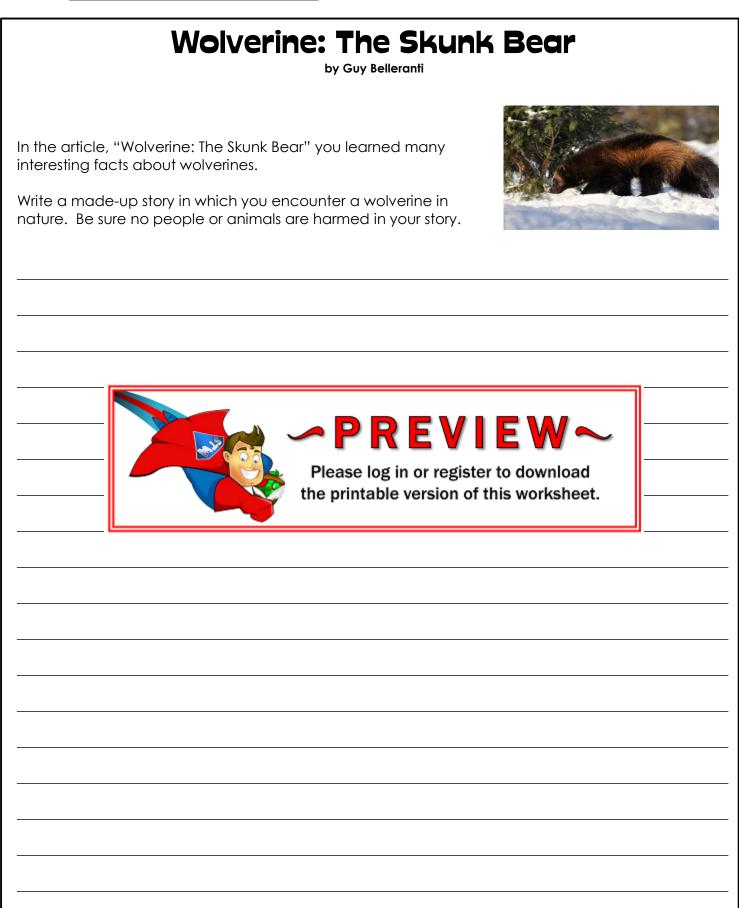
medium-sized dog, but they'll fight to defend their meals from larger animals like bears and even from packs of wolves. What kind of meals do wolverines like? Primarily meat. However, they also eat plants, seeds and berries if that's all they can find. They travel many miles each day searching for food.

Wolverines have sharp claws, powerful jaws and sharp teeth. One of their teeth is a special kind of upper molar. They use this molar to bite through the bones and meat of frozen dead animals they find in their travels. Wolverines also hunt live prey, eating small animals like mice, shrews and rabbits, medium sized animals like beavers, weasels and porcupines and weakened or injured large animals like deer, caribou and elk.

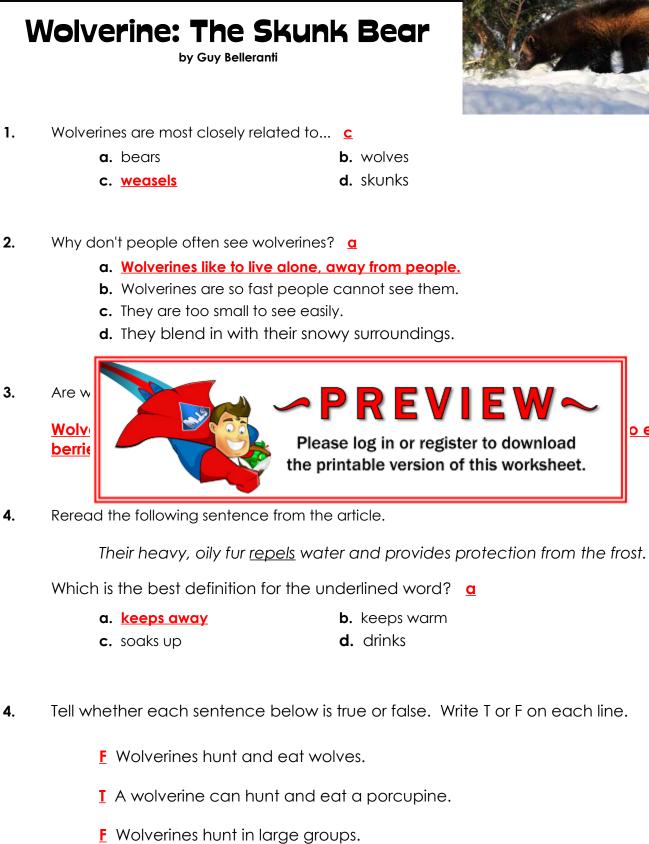
The wolverines' main predators are wolves, mountain lions and bears. At one time people hunted them for their thick and attractive fur. Today, however, wolverines are protected in many areas.







ANSWER KEY



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