

Name: _____

Master of the Grasses

by Guy Belleranti



What would you do if you saw a guinea pig that weighed 75, 100 or even 150 pounds? Of course, guinea pigs don't grow nearly that big, but if you saw a capybara, you might mistakenly think it was a giant guinea pig.

The largest species has ears, and



~ PREVIEW ~

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world's smallest

The name "capybara" means "master of the grasses". You see, capybaras are vegetation eaters, and grasses are the main food in their diets. Capybaras have two pairs of large incisor teeth to bite off grasses, tree bark, and other vegetation. Most animals have teeth that stop growing, but rodents like the capybara have a different kind of teeth. Their incisors keep growing longer and longer throughout their entire life. They need to file their teeth down on hard plants like trees bark to keep them from growing too long.

Capybaras are social animals and live in large groups. A mother capybara gives birth to up to six babies at a time, though the average number of babies is four.

Capybaras can run, jump in long leaps and swim. In fact, they spend lots of time in the water, and even have webbed feet to help them swim. The water keeps capybaras cool during the hot day, and it provides aquatic plant food. They also use the water for protection. They can submerge below



the surface to hide from predators such as jaguars, anacondas, and ocelots. A capybara's eyes, ears and nostrils are near the top of their head. This helps them breathe and keep watch for predators while swimming underwater. Still, they

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About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences working with animals and teaching others.

Name: _____

Master of the Grasses

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1. Why is the capybara called "master of the grasses"?
 - a. Its body blends in with the grass so enemies cannot find it.
 - b. It eats more grass than any other animal in the world.
 - c. Grass make up the main part of the capybara's diet.
 - d. It can dive underwater and hold its breath for up to five minutes.

2. How are a capybara's incisor teeth different from a human's incisor teeth?

3. Nc



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4. How much does an adult capybara weigh?
 - a. 25 - 50 pounds
 - b. 75 - 150 pounds
 - c. 150 - 200 pounds
 - d. over 200 pounds
5. What is the author's purpose for writing this article?
 - a. to teach readers about the largest mammal in South America
 - b. to teach readers about the largest rodent on Earth
 - c. to teach readers about different South American animals
 - d. to persuade readers to help save endangered capybaras

Name: _____

Master of the Grasses

Crossword Puzzle





~ PREVIEW ~

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Use information from the article "Master of the Grasses" to help you answer the crossword clues.

Across

- 4. popular pet that looks similar to the capybara
- 5. species of snake that is a predator to the capybara
- 6. type of teeth on a rodent that keep growing
- 7. capybaras are the largest species of this animal group

Down

- 1. name of the zoo where author Guy Belleranti works as a docent
- 2. four-legged predator that hunts capybaras
- 3. type of feet that help a capybara swim
- 4. main food in a capybara's diet

ANSWER KEY



Master of the Grasses

by Guy Belleranti

1. Why is the capybara called "master of the grasses"? **c**
 - a. Its body blends in with the grass so enemies cannot find it.
 - b. It eats more grass than any other animal in the world.
 - c. Grass make up the main part of the capybara's diet.**
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Preview

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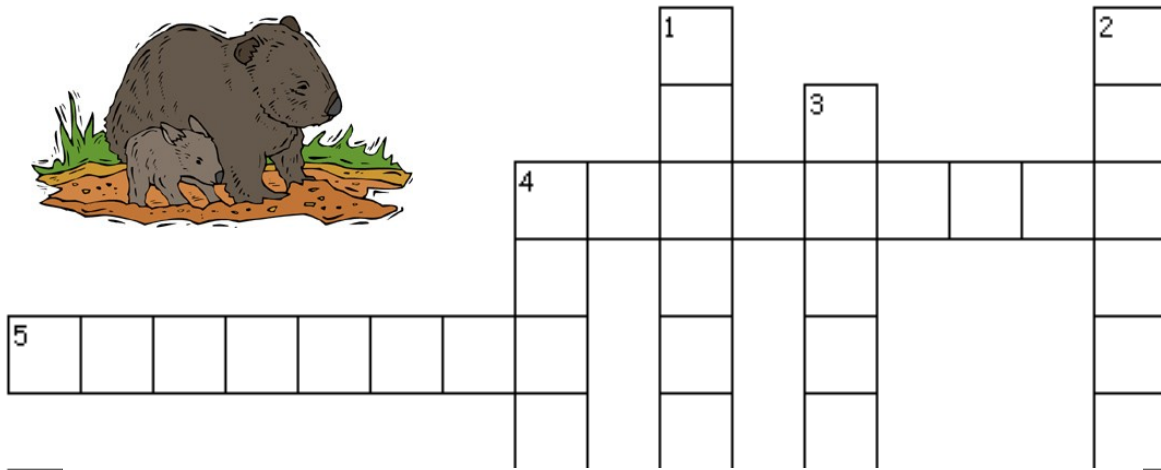
A cartoon superhero character with brown hair, wearing a red suit with a blue cape and a blue shield on his chest, is flying through the air. He is holding a green gift box with a red ribbon. The entire preview box is enclosed in a red double-line border.

3. How much does an adult capybara weigh? **b**
 - a. 25 - 50 pounds
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ANSWER KEY

Master of the Grasses

Crossword Puzzle



6



PREVIEW

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Use information from the clues.

word

Across

- popular pet that looks similar to the capybara (**guinea pig**)
- species of snake that is a predator to the capybara (**anaconda**)
- type of teeth on a rodent that keep growing (**incisors**)
- capybaras are the largest species of this animal group (**rodent**)

Down

- name of the zoo where author Guy Belleranti works as a docent (**Reid Park**)
- four-legged predator that hunts capybaras (**jaguar**)
- type of feet that help a capybara swim (**webbed**)
- main food in a capybara's diet (**grass**)