Did you know that some snakes live in the ocean? These snakes are called sea snakes.

There are approximately 60 species of sea snakes. Their muscular bodies have flattened, paddle-like tails that help them swim in the warm coastal waters of the Indian and Pacific oceans.

Like all snakes, sea snakes have forked tongues and scales. Also, like snakes that live on land, they shed their skin and breathe air. The way they breathe is different from snakes that live on land, however. Sea snakes breathe through lungs and their skin! This allows them to stay underwater for a long time. How long? An hour, two hours, or sometimes even more, depending on the species. Their nostrils are at the top of their snouts. This helps them to breathe more easily when they’re at the surface. Sea snakes also have valves in their nostrils that shut water out when they swim.

While all sea snakes are very venomous, most sea snakes have short fangs and mild temperaments unless provoked. Even then, many only give a “dry” bite and do not inject venom. However, the two species of beaked sea snakes are aggressive. Fishermen have been bitten, and even killed, by beaked sea snakes tangled in their nets.

Sea snakes are carnivores. They hunt along sandy bottoms, under rocks, in coral reefs, and in brackish mangrove swamps for fish, fish eggs, mollusks, and crustaceans.

Most sea snakes give birth to live young who then swim away.

The majority of sea snakes stay in the sea and are very clumsy on land. However, there are venomous sea kraits that come on land. They leave the water to breed, shed, lay eggs, and drink fresh water. Their larger belly scales help them move both on the ground and in the low hanging branches of small trees.
1. According to the information in the article, where would you be mostly likely to come across a sea snake in the wild?
   
a. In the coastal waters of Florida  
b. In the coral reefs of the Caribbean  
c. Off the coast of Ghana, in Western Africa  
d. In the Great Barrier Reef, off the coast of Australia

2. Sea snakes are similar to snakes that live on land, but they are also different in several ways. In the chart below, list three similarities and three differences between land snakes and sea snakes, based on what you read in the article.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways Sea Snakes and Land Snakes are Similar</th>
<th>Ways Sea Snakes and Land Snakes are Different</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>b.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. You read in the article that sea snakes are very venomous, but most sea snakes have mild temperaments unless they feel threatened. Which of the following is most likely to attack?

   a. a male sea snake  
   b. a female sea snake  
   c. a sea snake that feels safe  
   d. a beaked sea snake

4. Sea kraits are a species of sea snake that come on land. Describe a feature that helps them move around on the land.

   ________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________

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Sea Snakes
by Guy Belleranti

The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. ____________________________
   hint: a group of aquatic animals that includes crabs, shrimp, and lobster

2. ____________________________
   hint: likely to attack

3. ____________________________
   hint: type of tree that grows in tropical, coastal swamps

4. ____________________________
   hint: the openings of the nose that allow air to enter the body

5. ____________________________
   hint: animals that only eat meat

6. ____________________________
   hint: slightly salty, referring to water located where a body of fresh water and a body of salt water meet

7. ____________________________
   hint: the behaviors of animals that make them act a certain way

8. ____________________________
   hint: awkward in movement; uncoordinated

9. ____________________________
   hint: instigated or prompted to act out in a certain way

10. ____________________________
    hint: devices that prevent or allow the flow of water through them
In the article, “Sea Snakes,” you learned that sea snakes have special features that have allowed them to adapt to spending the majority of their lives underwater.

On the lines below, describe three traits of sea snakes that make them well-suited to living underwater.

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________
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<tr>
<td>Accept any three of the following answers:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>forked tongues, scales, shed skin, breathe</td>
<td>sea snakes breathe through their lungs and skin,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>air, carnivores</td>
<td>sea snakes can stay underwater for a long time,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sea snakes have nostrils on the top of their snouts,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sea snakes have valves in their noses to control</td>
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   c. a sea snake that feels safe  
   d. a beaked sea snake

4. Sea kraits are a species of sea snake that come on land. Describe a feature that helps them move around on the land.

   Sea kraits have larger belly scales that help them move on land more easily than other sea snakes.
Sea Snakes
by Guy Belleranti

The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. **crustaceans**
   - **hint**: a group of aquatic animals that includes crabs, shrimp, and lobster

2. **aggressive**
   - **hint**: likely to attack

3. **mangrove**
   - **hint**: type of tree that grows in tropical, coastal swamps

4. **nostrils**
   - **hint**: the openings of the nose that allow air to enter the body

5. **carnivores**
   - **hint**: animals that only eat meat

6. **brackish**
   - **hint**: slightly salty, referring to water located where a body of fresh water and a body of salt water meet

7. **temperaments**
   - **hint**: the behaviors of animals that make them act a certain way

8. **clumsy**
   - **hint**: awkward in movement; uncoordinated

9. **provoked**
   - **hint**: instigated or prompted to act out in a certain way

10. **valves**
    - **hint**: devices that prevent or allow the flow of water through them