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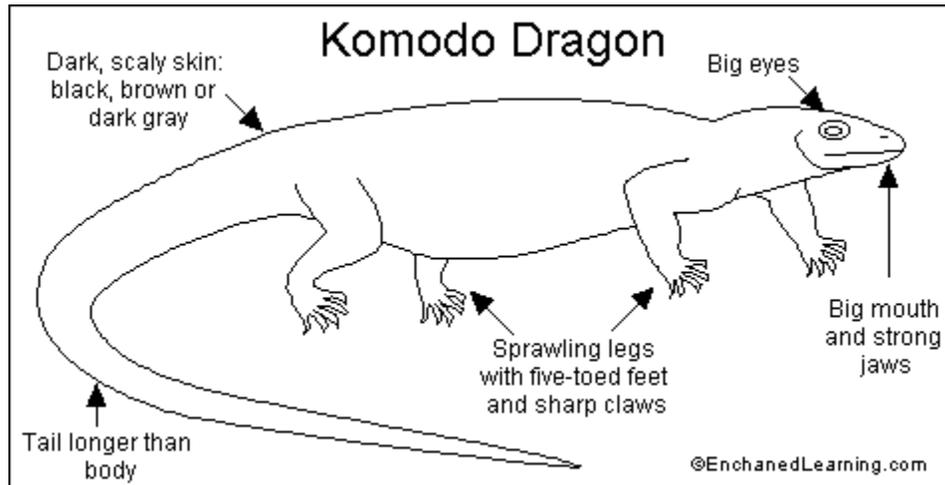


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Name _____

Non Fiction Reading Selection



The Komodo Dragon is the world's biggest lizard and a fierce predator. This solitary meat-eater is a reptile, a cold-blooded animal. It is **diurnal**, most active during the day. The Komodo Dragon is a fast runner; it can run up to 11 mph (18 kph). It is also a good tree climber and swimmer.

The Komodo Dragon's scientific name is *Varanus komodoensis* (genus and species). It is in danger of extinction due to loss of habitat. Its life span is about 20 years.

Habitat: Komodo Dragons live on islands in Indonesia, including the island of Komodo. They live in hot, humid, grassy lowlands and in rainforests. They sun themselves to increase their body temperature.

Anatomy: The Komodo Dragon averages almost 9 feet (2.8 m) long, but can get up to 10 feet (3 m) long and weighs up to 300 pounds (135 kg). It has large jaws, four short legs, and five-toed feet with sharp claws. The tail is longer than the body. It senses chemicals with a long, yellow, forked tongue.

Diet: The Komodo Dragon is a **carnivore** (meat-eater). It eats almost anything that it can catch or find, including goats, deer, wild boars, other lizards, and **carrion** (dead meat that it finds). The Komodo Dragon has disease-ridden bacteria in its mouth. After it bites its prey, the victim will sicken and die from blood poisoning within a day or two. The Komodo Dragon will then find the body and eat it. Komodo Dragons have been known to kill people.

Reproduction: The female digs a hole in the ground, lays 20-40 eggs, and then covers them up with dirt. The eggs hatch in about 7 months. Hatchlings eat mostly insects and live in trees.

Fiction Reading Selection

Of Dragons And Tea

by Aubry Thonon

3/1/96

Legends have it that Dragons are large, fierce creatures, covered in scales and breathing fire through their mouths or nostrils. Unfortunately, legends - like fishers' tales - have a habit of growing longer with every retelling and both the size and weaponry of Dragons seem to increase with the passage of time.

The Beast had all the outward appearances of a Dragon - smooth, shining scales; long reptilian neck and head; talons that looked capable of slicing wood without ever noticing the obstruction. Its size, however, came as a shock, for the Beast was barely one-and-a-half meters in height. It stood on its hind legs, tail against the ground to provide balance in this - for it - precarious position. On its back was a pack of old rags, emitting a stench of carrion so thick it made the Human's head spin.

"Ho!" cried the Man, readying his sword. "Prepare to meet thy doom, O Foul Fiend!" The Dragon looked around and, with a surprised look on its snout, placed a taloned hand delicately on its chest as if saying "*Moi?*"

"Ay, thee - O Malodorant Mutt! Long have I sought you to rid this place of your stench, thou Fetid Forager!" With a flourish of light, the Warrior prepared to swing his sword.

"I say," spoke the Dragon, "that's a rather nasty turn of speech for people who have just met, is it not?"

"Do not attempt to sway me, thou... er... thou..." the Human floundered.

"Putrid Pilferer?" helpfully provided the Dragon.

"That's rather good, yes... Thou Putrid Pilferer! Limb from limb will I rend thee and... and... That smell is rather strong, isn't it?" the Human asked, wrinkling his nose. "What have you *got* in there?"

"Fertilizer," answered the Dragon.

"Fertilizer? What for?"

"My salads. I'm afraid they do not grow well if left to themselves and do, sometimes, require a helping hand from the manure department." The Dragon dropped its pack in front of the puzzled Human and went on to open the flaps. There, in the pack's recesses, were several pounds of horse manure. "Top quality. Arabian stallions. You won't get this from just any village store, you know."

"But... Salad?" The Human was almost whimpering.

"Has nobody told you? Dragons are herbivores. We eat plants. I personally fancy myself as able to make a smashing Caesar's Salad."

"Herbivores?" The voice was now quite definitely whimpering. "But aren't you supposed to eat young maidens or something? And lay waste to entire villages?"

"Rumors. Superstitions. All of them started by warriors who have had a close encounter with one of my kind. I mean, what do you say when you come home from a day of slaying Dragon? 'It barely came up to my chest, weighed less than I and mightily did I slaughter this defenseless beast'? No... You make up tales of a large, ferocious beast able to rip your head with a single bite. Sounds better in the memoirs."

"But what about me? What'll I do now?"

The Dragon looked at the Human critically. "Hmm. You look as though you have seen better days. When did you last eat? Never mind," the Dragon continued before the Human could answer. "Let me invite you home. For dinner."

The Human took a step back. "'For dinner'? 'As dinner' you mean."

"Had I wanted you as the first course for my later repast I would have said so plainly," sighed the Dragon. "I assure you I have no wish to eat you - the idea is as revolting to me as I am sure it is to you." Picking up its pack, the Dragon turned towards the hills. "Well?"

The Human looked at his sword, then at the Dragon. Finally he shrugged, sheathed his weapon and followed the Beast down the path.

The Dragon's home was bright and airy, completely different from what the Human would have imagined it to be. Instead of jagged rocks, walls of lightly colored plaster rose to an embossed ceiling. Instead of the darkness of a gloomy cave, veins of crystals were filtering sunlight through the rocks themselves to the lair. Instead of the cold and dampness of a cave, this home was warm and dry. "Central heating," stated the Dragon. "Does wonders for my arthritis, you know."

"This is not like anything I would have expected," admitted the Human.

"You were perhaps expecting dungeons, littered bones, damsels in distress... or that dress?" The Dragon chuckled. "No. I'm afraid we are a very secular and solitary breed, we Dragons. It is not often we invite others into our homes. Even for dinner." Holding its pack in one claw, the Beast ambled down the corridor and into a large, well-decorated room.

Setting its pack near a smoked-glass door, the Dragon picked up a bone-china tea set, put it on a tray and rummaged through the varnished pantry for a second. Finally, it held up a packet of biscuits triumphantly and, placing it on the tray, returned to the centre of the room with its booty. Setting out the service, the Dragon continued to talk. "As you can see, I like my comforts. We have the library over here... And this is the smoking room - I would not go in there if I were you; bad for your lungs... The kitchen... And over there," it said, pointing to the door next to which lay the pack, "is the Hothouse."

"Where your plants are?" enquired the Human.

"Yes. I grow all of my food. It is healthier that way, you understand."

"May I see it? Your Hothouse I mean."

"Most certainly. And I will prepare the kitchen for dinner while you are inside."

The Dragon opened the glassed door and allowed the Human through, closing it behind him. It looked at the handle for a moment, then shook its serpentine head and moved to the kitchen.

Dragging a few pots and pans down from their resting place, the Dragon went on to prepare the salad dressing. It kept clanging the metal spoon loudly against the copper surface of the mixing bowl, trying not to listen to the screams that suddenly emerged from the Hothouse. For while the Dragon may have been vegetarian, its *dinner* definitely was not.

Dragon Venn Directions

For each section, provide two details.

You will be comparing the following: a Komodo Dragon (section A), the Beast from our story (section C), and a traditional dragon (section G).

Sections A, C, and G: Describe two unique characteristics of each character which the other two characters DO NOT share.

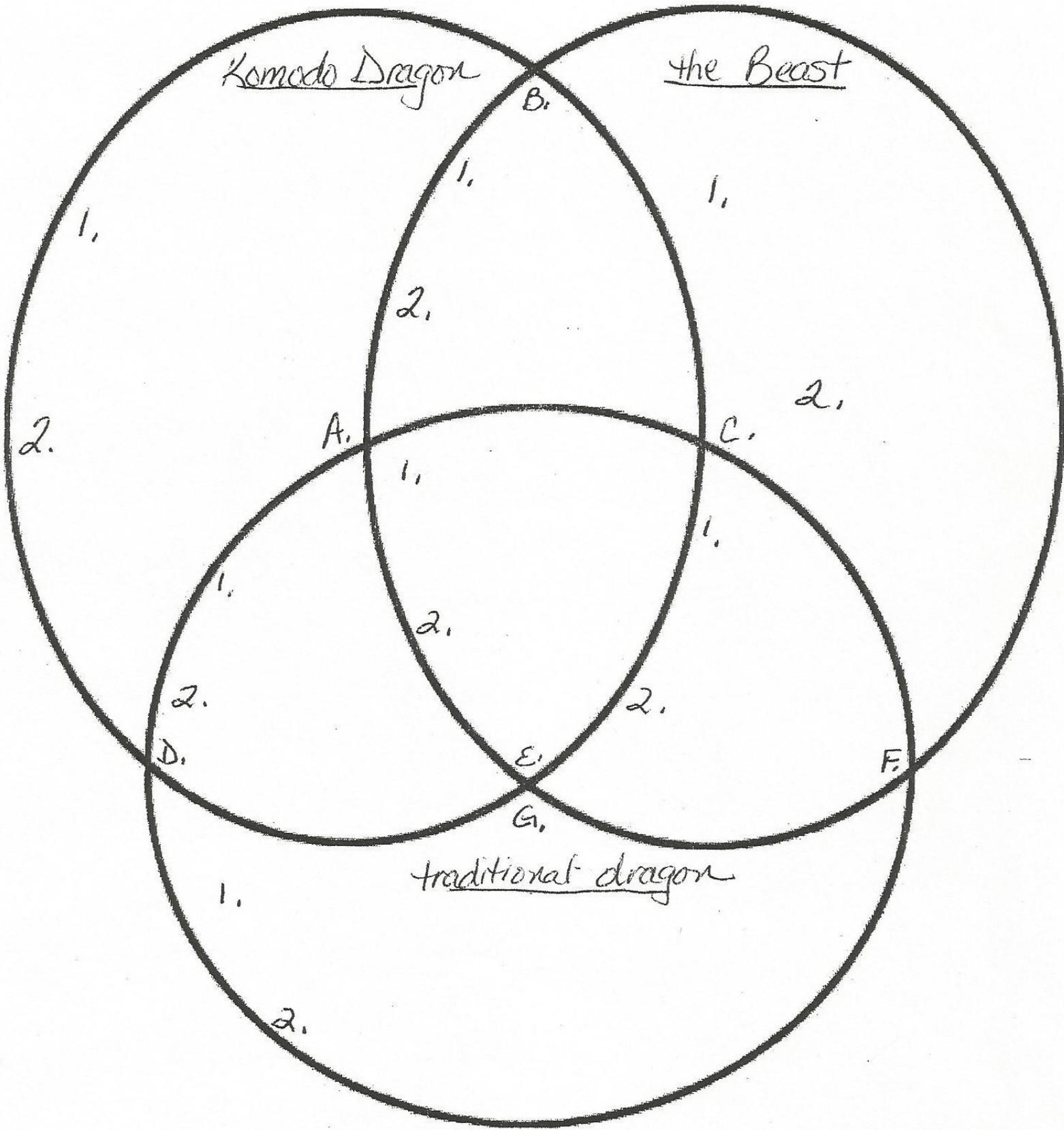
Section B: Describe two characteristics that a Komodo dragon and the Beast both share, but that a traditional dragon does not.

Section F: Describe two characteristics that the Beast and a traditional dragon both share, but that a Komodo dragon does not.

Section D: Describe two characteristics that a Komodo dragon and a traditional dragon both share, but that the Beast does not.

Section E: Describe two characteristics that all three characters share.

Dragon Venn



Create Your Own Dragon - Prewriting

You will be designing and writing about your own dragon. You will need to decide some things about your dragon before you start. When you have done this prewriting page, use the details you've come up with to draw a picture of your dragon, and to write a short story in which your dragon is in some way the hero/heroine of the story. Make your dragon unique and special. Use lots of imagination!!

1. What color is your dragon's body? _____

2. Describe any special markings, patterns, decorations, etc. on your dragon's body: _____

2. What does your dragon exhale? (smoke, fire, oil, water, poisonous gas, bubbles, icy air, etc.)

Why does your dragon exhale this? _____

3. Describe your dragon's wings:

Size: _____ Shape: _____

Color: _____ Texture: _____

How many: _____ Used for: JUST DECORATION or FLYING

4. Describe your dragon's scales:

Size: _____ Shape: _____

Color: _____ Texture: _____

5. Describe your dragon's tail. Think about things like: is it spiked? Does it end in a fork, or an arrow head, or maybe a club? What color is it? What does your dragon use it for?

6. How many feet does your dragon have? _____ What does your dragon use them for? _____

Create Your Own Dragon - Illustration

Draw your dragon in a picture that is also an illustration for your story. Pay attention to the details you gave in your prewriting about what your dragon looks like. Your picture and your prewriting details should match. Color your illustration. For extra credit, you can make a 3-D model of your dragon. 😊