

Whoa! That's a Big Cat!

"Your assignment over the weekend," said Ms. Rangel, "is to choose an endangered animal to write about. You can pair off in teams."

Billy poked Sam. "Let's do it together."

Sam looked at his best friend. "Sure. I'll come over on Saturday."

Saturday morning Sam showed up at Billy's house. "You ready to start?"

Billy took a bite of his pancakes. "Nuph." He swallowed then took a drink of milk.

"I know you don't like work, but let's get the report done," said Billy. "We can play ball after."

Billy gobbled his breakfast down then got his laptop. "What animal should we write about?"

Sam thought a minute. "Look up endangered animals." A page of animal pictures came onto the screen. "Hey, that one looks cool. Click on it."

"The Siberian tiger, also known as the Amur tiger," Billy read from the screen. "I'll read off some facts," he said. "You write them down. Ready?"

Sam grabbed a notepad and pen from his backpack. "Go ahead."

"The Amur tiger has thick yellow fur with black stripes. It's the largest cat in the world," said Billy. "Whoa! It says the largest on record is 850 pounds. That's mighty big!"

Sam took a look at the picture. "Imagine coming face-to-face with that?" He looked back at the paper. "Okay, go ahead."

Billy rattled off more facts from the page: "The Amur tiger lives in forests in the Russian Far East and northeastern China. They hunt deer and wild boar at night."

"Okay," said Sam. "I got it. Anything else?"

Billy scrolled the page then stopped. "They're endangered. They could become extinct. Imagine an animal like that disappearing forever? It's not right!"

"Whoa!" said Sam. "I've never seen you get so excited about anything besides eating and playing ball."

Billy got up. "We've got to do something. We'll get the whole class involved. Maybe even the whole school."

“Wait, first we need to know what has happened to make them endangered,” said Sam.

“Yeah, right.” Billy kept reading. “It says people illegally hunt the Amur tigers. And the forests they live in are being destroyed.” Billy shook his head. “This makes it hard for the tigers to find food or roam far.”

The boys finished their report. On Monday, they turned it in. Then Billy and Sam asked how they could get the school involved.

“Boys, I’m proud of you,” said Ms. Rangel. You went beyond the assignment and decided to take action. I’ll speak to the principal about it and see what we can do.”

Billy and Sam went back to their seats. “See that, Sammy. We’re men of action!”

Questions

1. What is another name for the Amur tiger?
2. What is one thing that has happened that has caused the Amur tiger to become endangered?
3. What does "extinct" mean?
4. What is a project that Billy and Sam could suggest for the school to do to help Amur tigers?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. gobbled
2. boar
3. endangered
4. extinct
5. roam

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1. "Billy **gobbled** his breakfast down then got his laptop."

- a. placed; put b. nibbled; tasted c. passed or gave d. crammed or gulped

2. "They hunt deer and wild **boar** at night"

- a. male pig b. female deer c. large snakes d. giant rodents

3. "They're **endangered**."

- a. dangerous; deadly b. famous or popular c. threatened or in danger d. unique; unusual

4. "They could become **extinct**"

- a. wiped out; dead b. ignored or forgotten c. less important d. common; plentiful

5. "This makes it hard for the tigers to find food or **roam** far."

- a. travel or wander b. smell; scent c. hunt or chase d. see; view