

NAME _____

DATE _____

BUSY AS A BEAVER



Read the following passage about beavers. Then, answer a few questions to share your newfound knowledge!

Have you ever seen a beaver? At first glance, they might look a little weird, with a wide, flat tail, webbed feet, and bright orange front teeth. These unique adaptations, though, are ways that beavers can survive. Beavers live near the water, so their flat tail helps them balance while they're swimming. Their webbed feet help them swim quickly out of harm's way. One of the strangest adaptations, though, might be their bright orange teeth. Beavers eat wood, so their teeth need to be extra hard. Their teeth are orange because they have iron in them! Now those are some strong teeth.

Building an ecosystem

Beavers are famously busy animals. While most humans keep busy with school or work, beavers keep busy by building a home. When they can, they burrow into the banks of large rivers and lakes. But, when they can't do that, they transform their habitat in a way that no other animal can do. First, they find a nice river, where they will make their home. Then, they knock down nearby trees by gnawing on them with their strong teeth and powerful jaws. Then, they use the logs, along with mud, rocks, and branches, to build a dam. The dam prevents water from flowing down the river, which causes a miniature lake to form. That makes the perfect environment for a beaver to splash around!

Why build?

Beavers build these dams to help them avoid predators. They do this by reassembling their ecosystem to create a larger area to swim in. This is helpful because they can swim much faster than they can walk. Without adaptations like their webbed feet to swim and strong teeth to chop wood, though, beavers would not be able to perform this wonderful transformation. Next time you see a river, try to imagine what it might look like if a beaver built a dam!

Based on what you've read, answer the following questions:

1) Why do beavers build dams? Use a quote from the text to prove your point.

2) In the third paragraph, what do you think the word "reassembling" means? How do you know? (hint: look for parts of the word that you may be familiar with)

3) In the first paragraph, use context clues to define the word "adaptations."

4) What is one adaptation that helps beavers build dams? How does it help them?
