Reading Contest 2017 (Small School) 1

 Why Don’t People Have Tails?

One day I was sitting in my living room, reading a comic book, and our cat walked into the room. Her tail was waving back and forth, then up and down, and then side to side. Her tail is always very busy! Then, I stopped reading, and turned on the television. I watched a show about animals, and all of the animals, of course, have tails. Some of the tails are very busy, like the tail of my cat, while some tails don’t seem to do much of anything, like the tail of a turtle. All animals have tails. Some are short, some are long. Some are busy, and some don’t move at all. Then I began to wonder. Why don’t people have tails? So, I asked my teacher, and I learned a lot about animals and their tails. There are many reasons animals have tails. Here is what she told me.

Birds fly with their tails. They use their tails when they want to turn left or right while they are flying in the air. Beavers use their large, flat tails to put mud in their dams and lodges. Monkeys use their tails as an extra hand. They can grab things with their tails. Some monkeys can even pick up a peanut with their tails. And monkeys can swing from tree to tree using their tails. Horses and cows use their tails as a fly-swatter. They spend much time standing, and they can use their tails to keep insects away. Fish and whales use their tails to swim. Sometimes their tails move up and down, and sometimes they move side to side. Sometimes their tails help them swim faster, and sometimes their tails help them turn left or turn right.

But, my teacher still did not answer my question. Why don’t people have tails? So, I asked her again. She thought about her answer for a few minutes, and then she told me her answer. The reason people don’t have tails is probably because they don’t really need them. I think this is a good answer, and I’m really happy that I don’t have a tail!

(word count: 357)

Reading Contest 2017 (Small School) 2

 It’s a Gorilla!

Last weekend was a lot of fun. My mother and father took me to the zoo on Saturday. I like learning about animals. I like to read books about animals, and I like to watch television shows about animals. But, reading books or watching television is not as much fun as seeing the animals in the wild or at the zoo. Seeing animals in the wild isn’t always easy. Sometimes you have to spend a lot of time waiting for the animal to show up. Other times you have to travel far away. If you want to see an elephant, for example, you have to go to Africa or India. So, we have to go to the zoo to see some animals.

As we were watching the different animals at the zoo, I noticed how some animals are scary, and others are not. For example, lions look very scary, because they have such big teeth and only eat meat. A giraffe is a big animal too, but for me it doesn’t look very scary. Also, giraffes don’t eat meat. They eat leaves from trees. So, I don’t feel afraid when I see a giraffe. We kept walking and looking at all the animals, and then my mother said, “Look! It’s a gorilla!” When I turned to see the gorilla, I felt very afraid. My mother could see that I felt afraid, and so she tried to make me feel better. Here is what she told me. The gorilla can be taller than a man, and can weigh up to 180 kilos. It is very powerful. But the gorilla is a gentle animal. It doesn’t eat meat. Although the gorilla is large and powerful, it only eats fruit, leaves, and insects. The gorilla likes to live in small groups in the forest. There are not many gorillas in the world now. People should not fear the gorilla. They should help and protect it. Ask your mother and father to take you to the zoo. And, don’t be afraid when someone says “Look! It’s a gorilla!”

(word count: 345)

Reading Contest 2017 (Small School) 3

 Be Positive!

If you could choose between feeling happy or feeling sad, which one would you choose? Of course you would choose to feel happy, right? But, feeling happy all the time isn’t easy to do. Sometimes bad things happen that make you feel sad. Maybe you got a bad test score, or your best friend forgot your birthday. Those are the times when it is very hard to feel happy. But, my friend Lisa has a good idea. Her idea is that, no matter what happens, even if something bad happens, you can always be positive! And, guess what? That is what Lisa does all the time! And, because she is a positive person, positive things happen to her. Lisa’s classes are often difficult. She has to spend a lot of time studying. But she doesn’t complain. Her friends ask her why she can’t go out to play with them, or maybe see a movie. She likes to answer their question by telling them, “Learning is better than wasting time.” I think that is a really good answer. Of course, Lisa sometimes goes to the movies. And, of course, she also plays with her friends. And, when her friends ask her why she isn’t studying, she tells them “There is a time and a place for everything. Now I don’t have a big test to get ready for, so I can take some time to relax and have fun.” I think that is a really good answer, too. Lisa also likes to meet people and make new friends. She says, “I can learn something from everyone.” Lisa also likes to help people. She says, “I hope people will help me someday.” Lisa studies hard and does well in school. But, she is modest. She says, “I don’t know very much, but I know that I want to know more!” As you can see, Lisa is a very positive person. This doesn’t mean she is never sad. It also doesn’t mean she is always happy. Being positive means that, no matter what happens, you always try your best and look for the good in everything. People like to be with Lisa. Do you know why?

(word count: 363)

Reading Contest 2017 (Medium School) 1

 I’m a Traffic Cop!

I’m a police officer. But I don’t chase bad guys. In fact I’m not really in very good shape, to be honest. I don’t arrest criminals. In fact, I’ve never arrested anyone in my life! I don’t like to fight. I don’t have a gun. I don’t even like guns. Guns are dangerous, and people sometimes get hurt with guns by accident. So, you know I am a police officer. Now, you must be wondering why I don’t chase bad guys or even carry a gun. Well, the answer to your question is very simple. You see, I’m a traffic cop. My job is directing traffic. Is it an important job? Of course it is. I help hundreds, maybe thousands of people every day. Because of me, people get to their jobs on time. I help children get to school safely. When I am on the job, people can walk safely across the streets. Older people can safely go for a walk. Is my job dangerous? Well, maybe it is not as dangerous as arresting criminals. And, maybe it is not as dangerous as chasing bad guys. But, it can still be dangerous. You see, all day long I have to stand in traffic. Cars are driving fast all around me. I have to be careful all the time. Cars turn in front of me. Cars turn in back of me. Some drivers are terrible and shouldn’t even be driving a car. Some drivers don’t see very well. Some drivers are busy talking on their cell phones. Other drivers might even be sending a text message! Sometimes drivers do other dangerous things while driving. Maybe they are eating while driving. One time I saw a woman putting on makeup while driving. Can you believe it? Last week a little old lady hit me with her car! I said, “Lady, be careful!” She said, “Young man, you shouldn’t play in traffic!” Luckily, I wasn’t hurt. I think she needs to go to the eye doctor and get some new glasses. Or, maybe she should just start taking the bus everywhere she wants to go. Is my job comfortable? No, it isn’t! I have to stand for hours in the hot sun. I have to stand in the rain. In the winter, I have to stand in the snow. I get hot, catch colds, and get wet. The pollution from all the cars is terrible. My job is dangerous, uncomfortable, and tiring. So, why do I do it? I do it because it is an important job! (word count: 428)

Reading Contest 2017 (Medium School) 2

 I’m Just a Normal Superhero

Hello, please allow me to introduce myself to you. First, let me tell you that I am not special. I am just your normal, everyday superhero. You might wonder what a superhero does every day. Well, I must tell you that I am, of course, very busy. I’m always doing something amazing. For example, I am often jumping over tall buildings. Sometimes I have to put out a forest fire. And, it seems that I have to save someone every ten minutes. That keeps me very busy, as you might imagine. Every now and then I have to catch a falling airplane. That is not as easy as it looks! If I make a mistake and catch the airplane the wrong way, it might break, and everyone will fall out of the airplane and die. Sometimes I have to hold up a falling bridge. If there is an earthquake, a bridge can fall, and I have to fly quickly and hold up the bridge until everyone gets off. Then, and only then, can I let the bridge fall into the river below. Believe it or not, I even have to fight aliens. You know, beings from another planet? I don’t know why, but they like to think they can take over earth. It makes me angry. They should just stay on their planet and leave us alone. And the bad guys all over the world are trying to hurt me. Of course, since I am a superhero, it isn’t very easy for me to get hurt. But that doesn’t seem to stop anyone from trying! Every day someone wants to hit me, kick me, shoot me, or blow me up with a bomb. Does that sound like fun to you? Of course not! Do you want to be around bad people like that? Of course not! And, finally, sometimes I even have to save the world. So, what’s the problem? Well, to be honest, I’m lonely. You see, I don’t have any real friends. It seems that I spend all my time flying around in the sky. I don’t really have time to just take a break and sit down to talk to someone. It’s hard for me to take it easy. And, as you might imagine, it’s a little dangerous to be with me. Everyone wants me to help them, but no one thinks about helping me. No one gives me anything. No one asks “Hey, Superhero! How do you feel today?” People think I’m made of steel, but I have feelings too! (word count: 424)

Reading Contest 2017 (Medium School) 3

 What Does a Doctor Do?

Doctors have busy jobs. But why, you may ask, are doctors so busy? Well, doctors are so busy because people often become sick. People often don’t know how to keep themselves healthy. Maybe they smoke. Maybe they drink too much wine. Or maybe they eat food that isn’t good for them. After a while, their bodies don’t feel well, and that’s when they go to see their doctor. It is a doctor’s responsibility to help and heal people. If someone doesn’t feel well, maybe he or she should just rest and get enough sleep. However, if the sickness is serious, they can see a doctor. We usually make an appointment to see a doctor. You can do this in person, over the telephone, or you can do it online by using your computer. Then, on the day of our appointment, we probably have to wait with many people in the waiting room. If it is an emergency, such as a broken bone, a serious burn, or a heart attack, we can go to the emergency room at a hospital. You don’t need to make an appointment to go to the emergency room. And, if you can’t drive you car because you are hurt too badly, you can call the police, and they will send an ambulance to your home. An ambulance can take you to the emergency room very quickly, and sometimes getting to the hospital as quickly as possible can save your life. A good doctor tries to listen to his patients. A good doctor tries to understand his patients. A good doctor prescribes medicine that helps his patients. A good doctor is very important. However, it is more important not to get sick. How do we stay healthy? Just ask your doctor. A doctor will tell you everything you need to know about staying healthy. You must eat healthy food. You can eat some junk food, like cake or candy, but only a little and not too often. You must exercise. Everyone is busy working or going to school, so sometimes it is not easy to find the time to exercise. So, you must make time to work out whenever you can. Finally, you must think good thoughts. Is it your habit to worry all the time? Do you get angry quickly and too often? These bad thoughts can also make you sick. Take good care of your body and you won’t have to find out what a doctor does! (word count: 412)

Reading Contest 2017 (large School) 1

 The Aliens in My Bedroom

A really terrible thing happened to Tommy. One night, while he was sleeping in his bedroom, he was awakened by a strange noise at his window. His eyes popped open and he suddenly sat up in bed. He looked at the window and saw a glowing red light. He wasn’t sure what was going on, when the window slowly and silently began to open. Then, very quickly, two little green aliens jumped into his room! He tried to scream for help, but he found he couldn’t speak. He tried to jump out of bed and run away, but he found he couldn’t move. The aliens were little, and had huge heads and really big eyes. Even though they were very little, they were able to pick up Tommy as if he were a baby. They lifted him out of his bed, carried him to the open window, and took him inside their spaceship. And then – woosh! – the spaceship silently took off into space. A few moments later Tommy could look out of the window of the spaceship and see Earth. He couldn’t believe his eyes! He was looking down on Earth from inside an alien spaceship! Now Tommy began to worry. What will the aliens do to him? Will they experiment on him like a scientist on Earth might with a rat or a mouse? Will they take him to their planet and put him in a cage, like an animal in the zoo? Or maybe they like to eat people, and want to have him for their dinner! Tommy was really getting worried, but then the aliens asked him to sit down. They didn’t want to hurt Tommy, they said. They just wanted to ask him some questions. First, they wanted to know why Earth was so polluted. Tommy wasn’t sure how to answer that question. Then, they asked him why humans were always fighting a war somewhere. That question really puzzled Tommy. He really didn’t know the answer to that one. They also asked him why humans cried so much. Now he was completely baffled. These questions aren’t difficult, thought Tommy. So, why don’t I know the answers? Tommy was starting to worry again. So, he said to the aliens, “I don’t know anything. I’m only a junior high school student!” Upon hearing this, the little green aliens became angry. “Stupid humans! They don’t know anything!” they said. “Please don’t eat me!” Tommy suddenly shouted. The aliens began to laugh loudly. “We don’t want to eat you!” they laughed. “We’re vegetarians – we don’t eat animals – or humans!” They flew their spaceship back to Earth, stopped next to Tommy’s bedroom window, and carried Tommy back to his bed. Soon Tommy was safely asleep under his blankets. The next morning, Tommy opened his eyes. He sat up quickly in his bed and looked over at the window. He said, “What a terrible nightmare! I’ll never again watch a science fiction movie before going to bed!”

(word count: 495)

Reading Contest 2017 (Large School) 2

 The Night and Day Twins

Teddy and Eddie were twins. They looked exactly alike. They were both tall, with straight, black hair, and brown eyes. But they were really very different in other ways. In fact you could even say that they were as different as night and day. For example, Teddy was as quiet as a mouse. In school, when it was his turn to answer a question, the teacher always had to ask him to speak louder. Eddie, on the other hand, was too loud. He didn’t even know how to whisper. If he wanted to borrow his classmate’s eraser, everyone in the class, including the teacher, knew that Eddie had forgotten his eraser that day. Teddy was very polite to everyone. If the teacher was carrying some heavy books, Teddy would always offer to help. Eddie, however, wouldn’t even hold the door open for the teacher. He was very impolite. Teddy was very considerate. He was considerate of other people’s feelings and problems. One time his friend’s rabbit died, and Teddy did his best to help his friend get over his feelings of sadness. Eddie would laugh if someone tripped and fell down in front of him. Eddie was very inconsiderate. Teddy was hard-working and spent a lot of time studying. If a big test was coming, Teddy wouldn’t play or even go outside. He would spend all his free time preparing for the test. Eddie, by contrast, was lazy and spent a great deal of time playing video games. Even before a big test, he would relax and take it easy. Although Teddy was a very quiet boy, he liked to smile. He would often smile at people he passed on the street, even though he did not know them. Because Eddie was loud, he liked to yell. Even though he rarely had anything important to say, he felt that if he said it loud enough, people would want to listen to him speak. Teddy was a responsible boy. If he promised to do something, he would always do it. Eddie was irresponsible. His mother always had to remind him to do his chores around the house. She had to tell him over and over to take out the garbage, or clean his room. She even had to make sure he brushed his teeth before going to bed. He was always forgetting to do something. Do you know anyone like Teddy? He’s quiet, polite, considerate, hard-working, and responsible. Do you know anyone like Eddie? He is loud, impolite, inconsiderate, lazy, and irresponsible. I know a few people who are just like Teddy. They are fun to be around and make good friends. And, I also know a few people like Eddie. They don’t make good friends and cause a lot of trouble. Teddy and Eddie are twins, but they are complete opposites. That is why everyone called them the “night and day” twins.

(word count: 482)

Reading Contest 2017 (Large School) 3

 The Hare and the Tortoise

A big brown hare lived up in the mountains of a bright and sunny countryside. He made his home among beautiful wild flowers. Not very far from him, a tortoise also had a house, among the stones by the side of a pretty little river.

The tortoise was a strange fellow and sat all day under his big, hard shell. Now and then he would stick out his small head from under the shell. Then with his four little feet, he would take a slow walk into the water and out again. The rest of the time he spent sleeping among the plants by the river.

One day, as he put out his funny little head, he saw the hare’s bright eyes looking at him. The hare’s mouth was smiling and he seemed to be laughing. The tortoise looked at the hare and said quietly.

“Why are you laughing at me, Mr. Hare?”

“Because you are such a strange-looking animal,” replied the hare. “You’ve got no legs!”

The tortoise did his best to show the hare that his observation was untrue. He tried very hard to stick his legs out from his shell; but, being a tortoise, he was unable to do it. So, he gave up trying.

“Run a race with me!” the tortoise said angrily. “You will see whether or not I have any legs!”

“A race – with you?” The hare suddenly began to laugh very loudly. “Oh certainly, you’re funny Mr. Tortoise! Where will we race to?”

“We will race to that city.” Said the tortoise, looking toward the buildings of a city many miles away.

The hare agreed, and said “Good-bye, Mr. Tortoise. I’ll see you again in a day or two!”

Mr. Hare started off very quickly, running happily toward the city. Mr. Hare ran quickly for a mile or so and then, feeling quite tired, looked for a nice spot where he could sleep.

But Mr. Tortoise, under his shell, was not at all tired. Slowly and surely, slowly and surely, he made his way down to the river on the left. He swam across it very easily. Then up the hill on the right he went, his funny little feet carrying him along. Through the woods in the valley he continued slowly, under the shade of the trees. Finally, as evening came on, he saw the lighted houses of the city right in front of him.

The sun finally set and the bright moon rose high in the sky. Mr. Hare suddenly woke up and said “Oh my goodness – I’ve overslept!”

He ran as fast as he could, and finally reached the gates of the city. But, the tortoise was already there, resting and waiting for Mr. Hare to arrive.

Mr. Tortoise then said, “You’re a quick runner, Mr. Hare, and nobody knows that better than myself! But if quick runners want to win races against slow runners, they should not lie down and go to sleep along the way!”

(word count: 496)