

Text Structure: Compare and Contrast in Nonfiction Texts



Name: _____ Date: _____

Alligators vs. Crocodiles: Kings of the Wetlands

This is an original practice passage, not a reproduction of a primary source. Read the answer explanations as interpretations of the provided text.

Although alligators and crocodiles look very similar at first glance, they belong to different biological families and possess distinct physical characteristics. Both reptiles are cold-blooded carnivores with armored scales, powerful swimming tails, and webbed feet designed for aquatic hunting. However, their habitats and jaw shapes reveal major differences. Alligators have wide, rounded U-shaped snouts adapted for crushing turtle shells and live predominantly in fresh water marshes throughout the southeastern United States and China. In contrast, crocodiles feature narrower, pointed V-shaped snouts and specialized salt-glands on their tongues that allow them to thrive in salty coastal waters and tropical estuaries across Africa, Australia, and the Americas. Furthermore, when a crocodile closes its jaws, its large fourth lower tooth remains prominently visible on the outside, whereas an alligator's lower teeth are completely hidden.

1. Which physical trait is shared by BOTH alligators and crocodiles according to the passage?

- A. Narrow V-shaped pointed snouts
- B. Cold-blooded bodies with armored scales and webbed feet
- C. Specialized salt-excreting glands on their tongues
- D. A visible fourth lower tooth when the mouth is closed

2. How can a scientist tell an alligator from a crocodile by looking at the shape of its snout?

- A. Alligators have wide, rounded U-shaped snouts, while crocodiles have pointed V-shaped snouts.
- B. Crocodiles have round snouts and alligators have no teeth.
- C. Alligators have longer snouts than any crocodile.
- D. Both animals have identical snout profiles.

3. Which signal phrase in the passage indicates that a contrasting difference is being introduced?

- A. 'Both reptiles'
- B. 'In contrast'
- C. 'At first glance'
- D. 'Designed for'