

Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Family Times

## Summary

### ***The Mystery of Saint Matthew Island***

The reindeer herd on Saint Matthew Island had grown to six thousand animals. Suddenly, almost all of the reindeer died. A scientist tries to figure out why. His research rules out the usual causes: predators, disease, and old age. He discovers that the reindeer had starved, and a brutal winter sealed their fate.

### **Activity**

**Survival Strategies** Imagine you and members of your family are scientists studying animals in the wild. Talk with your family about how animals survive. Discuss the different things that can threaten a wild animal's survival, both natural and man-made.



## Comprehension Skill

### **Main Idea and Details**

The **main idea** is an important point that has at least one supporting detail. **Details** are smaller pieces of information that tell more about the main idea.

### **Activity**

**Zero In** Ask members of your family for their opinions about certain animals. For each opinion, or main idea, discuss ideas for supporting details. Make a list of the main ideas and the details that support them.

## Lesson Vocabulary

### Words to Know

Knowing the meanings of these words is important to reading *The Mystery of Saint Matthew Island*. Practice using these words.

### Vocabulary Words

**bleached** whitened by exposure to sunlight or by use of chemicals

**carcasses** bodies of dead animals

**decay** process of rotting

**parasites** living things that live on or in others, from which they get their food, often harming the others in the process

**scrawny** having little flesh; lean; thin; skinny

**starvation** suffering from extreme hunger

**suspicious** beliefs, feelings, thoughts

**tundra** a vast, treeless plain in the arctic regions

## Grammar

### Conjunctions

A **conjunction** is a word that joins words, phrases, or entire sentences.

*And, or, and but* are conjunctions. You can use conjunctions to join subjects, predicates, and objects. *For example: John and Kathleen; rice or noodles.*

Sometimes two sentences about related topics can be combined, using a comma and a conjunction or a subordinating conjunction such as *because, if, then, or when*. *For example: We went to the zoo, because we love tigers.*

### Activity

**Be a Joiner** Make a three-column chart. In the first and third columns, write three simple sentences. In the middle column, write *and, or, and but*. Cut the paper so there is one sentence on each cut piece of paper. Take turns combining sentences using different conjunctions. Do this by moving the sentences in front of and after each conjunction.

## Practice Tested Spelling Words

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Main Idea and Details

- The **topic** is the overall subject of a piece of writing. The **main idea** of a selection is the most important idea about the topic of that selection. **Details** are small pieces of information that tell more about the main idea.
- Sometimes the author states the main idea in a single sentence. When the author does not state the main idea, the reader must figure it out.

**Directions** Read the following passage. Then complete the diagram below.

**P**lants, just like animals, can become endangered as a result of the actions of human beings. Some plants are threatened after the insects that pollinate the plant die off. For example, one type of milkweed has nearly disappeared because chemicals killed off the butterfly that pollinates the milkweed. In addition, a plant can become endangered when

buildings and roads take over the open lands where it grows. Other human activities such as farming and logging can threaten plants, too. Finally, human pollution of land and water threatens many types of natural life, including plants. People are often unaware of it, but human activities can have harmful effects on plants and other parts of the natural world.

**Main Idea**

1.

**Details**

2.

3.

4.

5.

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**Home Activity** Your child identified the main idea and supporting details of a nonfiction passage. Together, work to identify the main idea and supporting details of individual paragraphs in a magazine article about animals.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary

**Directions** Choose the word from the box that best matches each definition. Write the word on the line.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. a vast, treeless plain in arctic regions
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. living things that live on or in others, from which they get food
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. having little flesh; lean; thin
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. whitened by exposure to sunlight or the use of chemicals
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. beliefs; feelings; thoughts

### Check the Words You Know

- \_\_\_bleached
- \_\_\_carcasses
- \_\_\_decay
- \_\_\_parasites
- \_\_\_scrawny
- \_\_\_starvation
- \_\_\_suspicions
- \_\_\_tundra

**Directions** Choose the word from the box that best matches each clue. Write the word on the line.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. This ground is frozen even in summer.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Lice and tapeworms are examples of these.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. This is an extreme form of hunger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. These are dead bodies of animals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. This is the process of rotting.

## Write a Memo

Imagine that you are a zookeeper reporting on illnesses among animals at a zoo. On a separate sheet of paper, write a memo to the zoo's director about what you have observed. Use as many vocabulary words as you can.



**Home Activity** Your child identified and used vocabulary words from *The Mystery of Saint Matthew Island*. Together, read a story or nonfiction article. Have him or her point out unfamiliar words. Work together to figure out the meaning of each word by using other words that appear near it.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Vocabulary • Word Structure

- An **ending** is a letter or letters added to the end of a base word. Recognizing an ending will help you figure out the word's meaning.
- The ending *-ed* is added to a verb to make it past tense. The ending *-ing* is added to a verb to make it tell about present or ongoing actions. The endings *-s* or *-es* are added to a singular noun to make it refer to more than one person, place, or thing.

**Directions** Read the following passage. Then answer the questions below.

The pilot flew above the arctic tundra, looking for baby seals. He was checking on the population of seals for a conservation organization. Although hunters were not allowed to kill the seals, some people had suspicions that seals were being killed. The pilot was strongly hoping he wouldn't find any seal carcasses

bleached by the sun. As he steered the airplane closer to the frozen ground, he glimpsed a few seals. They did look scrawny, probably because of parasites, but they were alive. Then he saw more and more seals coming into view. The pilot was very pleased.

1. What part of speech is *suspicions*? What meaning does the ending give the word?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How does the ending in *checking* affect the word's meaning?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the meaning of *bleached*? What effect does the ending have on the word's meaning?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How would removing the ending in *parasites* change the meaning of the word?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Choose another *-s* or *-ed* word from the passage and write sentences using the word with and without the ending.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Home Activity** Your child identified and used word endings to help determine the meaning of new words in a passage. Work with your child to identify unfamiliar words in another article. Together, identify word endings that help you understand the new words.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Sequence

**Directions** Read the following article. Then answer the questions below.

**B**efore the school was built in 1950, the land on which it stands was a swamp. Back then, the earth was soft, wet, and marshy. Beavers, otters, and turtles slid through the watery land. Cranes, herons, hawks, and egrets swooped overhead or waded in the water.

Then, after the town decided to build the school, the land was filled in. First,

truckloads of dirt were added to provide a firm base. Afterward, earth movers were used to shape the land, creating a flat surface with a few low hills. Finally, the school was constructed on top of the newly sculpted land. When the building was finished, no swamp animals or water birds remained. Now students and teachers have taken the place of toads and turtles.

1. According to the article, what was the land like originally? What clues tell you this condition was present before the building of the school?

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2. What first lived on the land? Who is there now?

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3. What was the first change that was made to the land?

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4. What was the next step before the school was constructed?

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5. On a separate sheet of paper, explain how clues clarify the sequence of changes described in the second paragraph. How do these clues help you to understand the article?

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**Home Activity** Your child has identified the sequence of changes that a piece of land has undergone. Together, read a newspaper article. Work with your child to make a time line to clarify the sequence of events.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Main Idea and Details

- The **topic** is the overall subject of a piece of writing. The **main idea** of a selection is the most important idea about the topic of that selection. **Details** are small pieces of information that tell more about the main idea.

**Directions** Read the following passage. Then answer the questions below.

Sometimes a certain species of animal dies off naturally or through another cause, such as hunting by humans. In these cases, there will be an increase in the number of the animals that the dying species feeds on.

An example of this process can be seen in the relationship among wolves and panthers and deer. Wolves and panthers have largely disappeared from the United States. Consequently, their natural prey,

deer, have multiplied. There are more deer in the country now than there were before colonists settled the land centuries ago. Because the deer population has become very large, herds of deer quickly eat up all the food in some areas. Of course, when food is lacking, the animals starve. Human beings can help an area recover its natural balance. In some cases, people introduce natural enemies into an area to control the numbers of the prey animal.

1. In one or two words, what is the topic of this passage?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the main idea of the passage?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is one important detail that tells more about the main idea?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is another detail that supports the main idea?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Identify the text structure used in each paragraph of this article.  
\_\_\_\_\_



**Home Activity** Your child identified the main idea and supporting details of a nonfiction passage. Together, read a magazine article about another wild animal. Work together to identify the main idea and supporting details of the article.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Main Idea and Details

- The **topic** is the overall subject of a piece of writing. The **main idea** of a selection is the most important idea about the topic of that selection. **Details** are small pieces of information that tell more about the main idea.
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**Directions** Read the following passage. Then complete the diagram below.

**M**ari wondered why the numbers of some species swing up or down. Her science teacher explained that environment controls an animal’s population size.

“Food, shelter, water, and space all have an effect,” Mr. Gonzalez explained. “The animals’ numbers are limited by whichever one of these is least available.”

“But what about other animals?” Mari asked. “Don’t they have an effect, too?”

“Yes, that’s the other part of the puzzle,” said Mr. Gonzalez. “Enemies can cut down an animal’s numbers. Some species are reduced because other animals are competing for the same food. Also, if there is a lack of prey for an animal, that animal’s numbers will drop.”

### Main Idea

1. Animal numbers are determined by \_\_\_\_\_



### Details

2. One thing that limits animal numbers is availability of \_\_\_\_\_

3. Also limiting animal numbers is lack of \_\_\_\_\_

4. An animals’ numbers will decline if enemies are \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

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**Home Activity** Your child identified the main idea and supporting details of a nonfiction passage. Work with your child to identify the main idea and supporting details of individual paragraphs in a magazine article about wild animals.

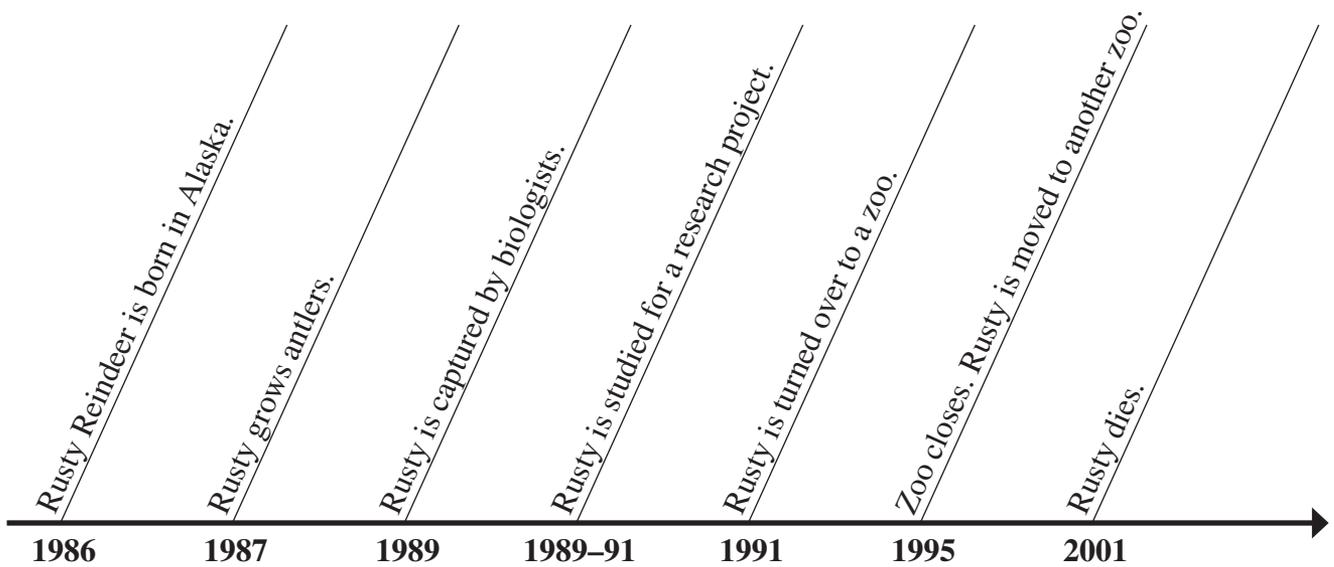
Name \_\_\_\_\_

# Time Line

- A **time line** is a chart that shows a sequence of events. Usually a time line uses a bar divided into periods of time to show the order of events. Some time lines are read left to right, and others are read top to bottom.
- You can use a time line to show the time order of events in a nonfiction text. A time line can also show the order of events in a work of fiction.
- A time line may cover any length of time, such as a day or thousands of years. Pay attention to the title and labels on a time line.

**Directions** Read the following time line. Then answer the questions below.

### The Life of a Reindeer



1. How is this time line organized? What is the topic of this time line?

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2. How many years passed between Rusty's birth and his capture?

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3. How long was Rusty in zoos?

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4. How old was Rusty when he died?

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5. The average age of a reindeer in the wild is ten to twelve years. How does the time line help you draw a conclusion about Rusty's life span? Explain.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions** Read the following time line. Then answer the questions.

<b>History of the Plant That Grew Too Well</b>	
<b>1876</b>	Kudzu, a vine from Japan, arrives in U.S.
<b>1900s</b>	Florida farmers begin to feed kudzu to animals.
<b>1930s</b>	U.S. Soil Conservation Service urges use of kudzu to prevent erosion.
<b>1930s</b>	U.S. Civilian Conservation Corps plants kudzu.
<b>1940s</b>	Government pays farmers to plant kudzu.
<b>1940s</b>	Georgia radio personality starts Kudzu Clubs.
<b>1953</b>	Government discourages use of kudzu.
<b>1972</b>	Government declares kudzu a weed.
<b>2004</b>	Kudzu covers 6 million acres in South; people work to eliminate it.

6. What is the topic of this time line? What is the best way to read this time line?

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7. Why is a time line appropriate for this topic?

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8. When was kudzu first introduced to the United States?

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9. How long did it take for the U.S. government to declare kudzu a weed? When was kudzu planted most heavily?

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10. What happened with kudzu most recently, according to the time line?

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**Home Activity** Your child learned about using time lines as resources. Together, look at a time line in a history book. Ask your child to explain entries and to answer your questions about time order.