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National Geographic Readers: Predator Face-Off

By: Melissa Stewart

Find out what happens when predator is pitted against predator in this exciting, informative reader.

5-7	15-30 mins	-	2.7
Age Range	Length	Lexile [®] Measure	AR Level

Predator Face-Off

Melissa Stewart



Washington, D.C.

What's a Predator?

Great white sharks swim in the sea.
Cheetahs run across the land.
Parrot snakes slide along tree branches.

They are very different. But they all eat meat.

These animals are predators (PRED-uh-ters).



Word Bite



PREDATOR: An animal that hunts other animals for food

cheetah



great white shark



parrot snake

Shark Attack!

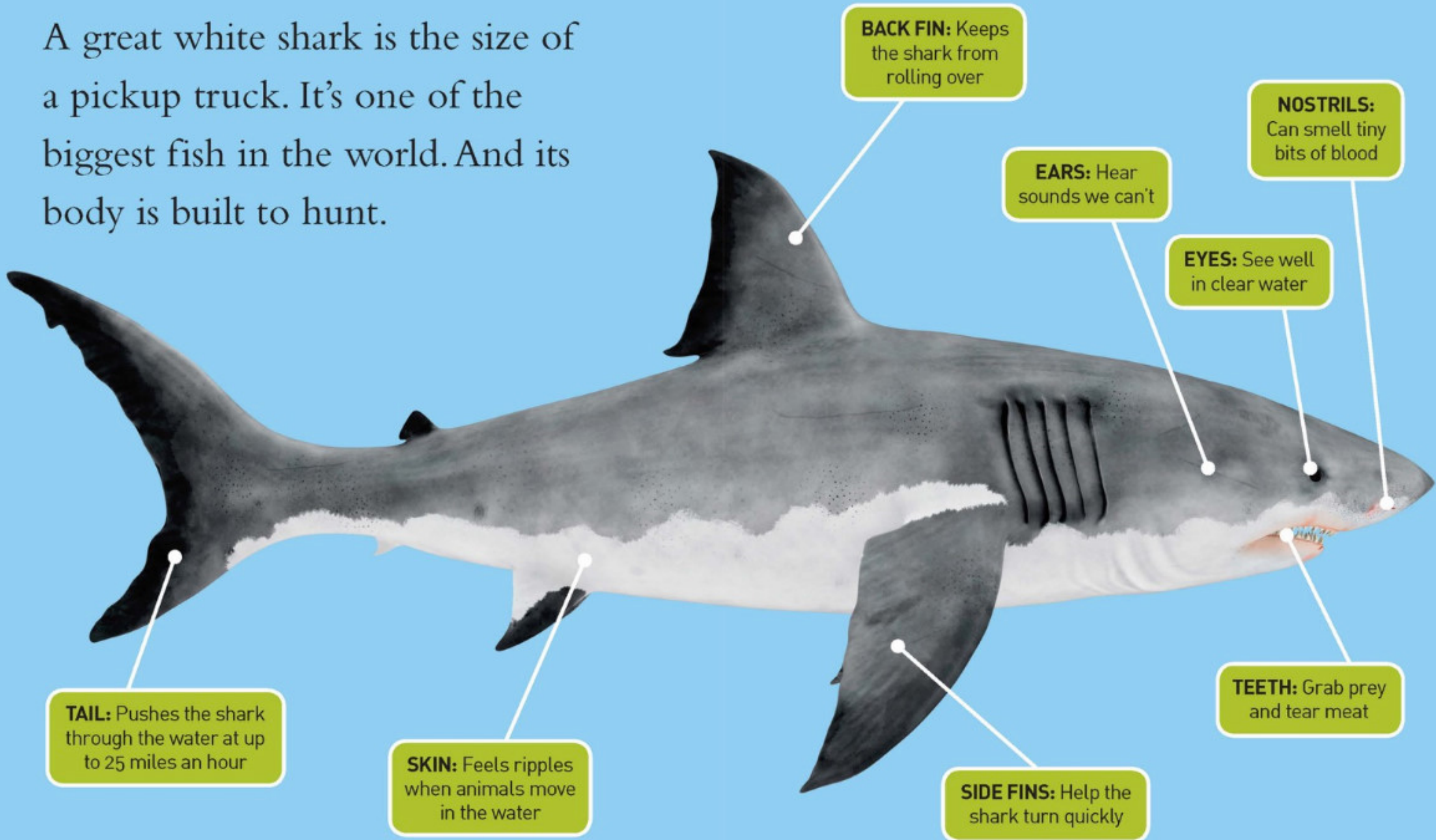
A great white shark spots a seal. It darts up and crashes into its prey. *Chomp!* The shark takes a big bite. It swims in a circle. Then it starts to eat.

Word Bite



PREY: An animal that is eaten by another animal

A great white shark is the size of a pickup truck. It's one of the biggest fish in the world. And its body is built to hunt.



Q

What do you call the stuff stuck between a shark's teeth?

Slow swimmers.

A

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How many teeth does a great white shark use at once?
About 50.



shark teeth



This photo shows the teeth and jaw on a great white shark skeleton.

Each tooth will wear out.
Then the one behind it takes its place. A shark may use 20,000 teeth in its life.

Run, Cheetah, Run

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Q

Which side of a cheetah has the most spots?

The outside!

A



Shh! A cheetah slinks through the grass. It creeps closer and closer to a gazelle (guh-ZELL).

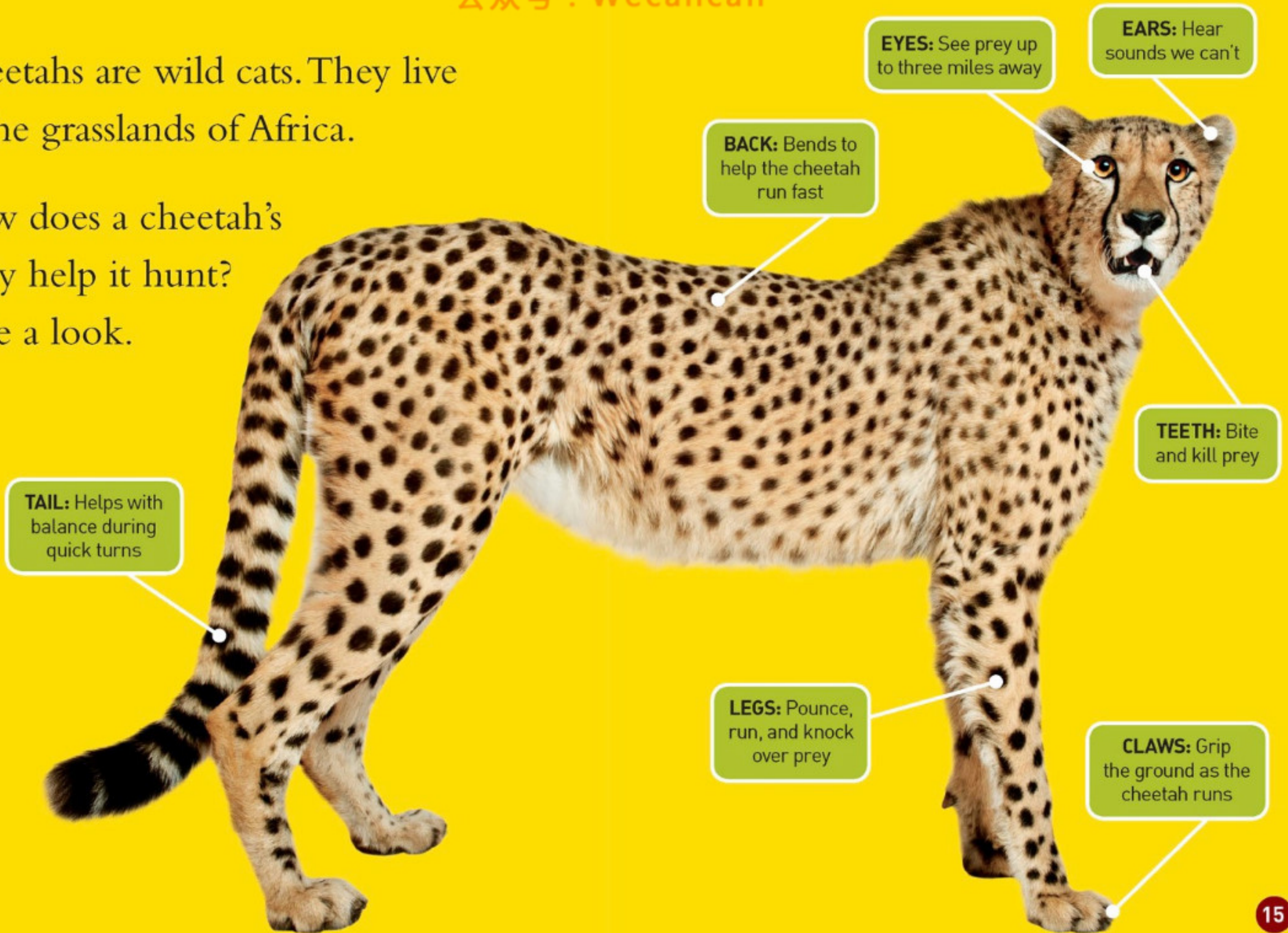
The cheetah leaps. The chase is on!

Thud! The predator knocks the gazelle to the ground and bites its neck.

Time to eat.

Cheetahs are wild cats. They live in the grasslands of Africa.

How does a cheetah's body help it hunt? Take a look.



Q

What do cheetahs have that other predators don't?

Baby cheetahs.

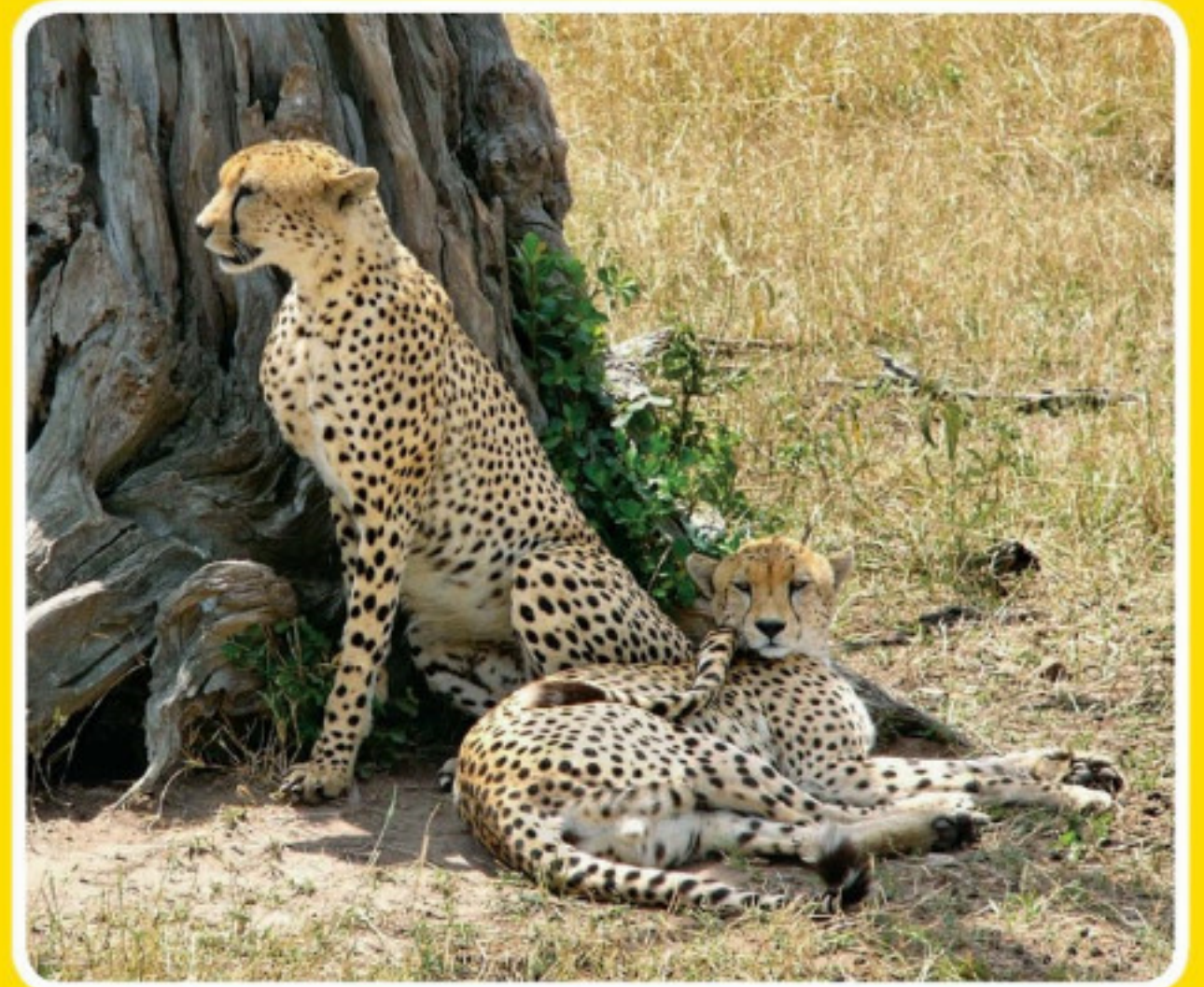
A

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Cheetahs are the fastest animals on land. They can run more than 60 miles an hour—but not for long.

They have to slow down after about 20 seconds.



The Need for Speed

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Are cheetahs the only fast predators on Earth? No way! Lots of animals use speed to get food.



A mantis shrimp breaks open a clam shell with its claws. It can punch through water at 50 miles an hour.



A sailfish can swim up to 68 miles an hour. It uses its super speed to catch smaller fish.

A peregrine (PEAR-eh-gren) falcon dives to catch smaller birds. It can travel up to 200 miles an hour.



A chameleon (kuh-MEEL-yun) has a quick tongue. It can grab an insect faster than you can blink your eyes.



It's a Snake!

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A parrot snake flicks its tongue.
In. Out. In. Out.



Finally, it picks up a scent. Tree frog!

The snake winds through the trees.

Then it spots the prey. It darts forward and grabs the frog.

Dinnertime!

Q

How are sharks and snakes the same?

A Both words have six letters.

A



Q Why do scientists measure snakes in inches? **A** Snakes don't have feet!

EYES: See well during the day

SKIN: Stretches when the snake swallows prey


THIN BODY: Doesn't get stuck on branches

The parrot snake lives in Central America and South America. It makes its home in forests. Its body is perfect for hunting in trees.



TONGUE: Smells the air for prey

TEETH: Grab prey

Word Bite 
SCUTES: The wide scales on a snake's belly

SCUTES: Grip tree bark so the snake won't fall

A parrot snake has 36 small teeth. They can grab prey. But they can't chew.



How does the snake swallow prey?

1

It stretches its mouth over the prey.

2

It pulls back the jaws on one side of its head.



3

It pulls back the jaws on the other side of its head.

4

Slowly. Slowly. The prey slides into the snake's mouth and down its throat.

Snakes With Venom

The inland taipan has the deadliest venom. Just one drop can kill a person.

Most snakes hunt like a parrot snake. But some snakes make venom. It flows into prey through two large fangs.

The Great Lakes bush viper has huge fangs, but its venom isn't strong enough to kill a person.

fangs

/ecan can

The king cobra is the biggest snake with venom. It usually eats other snakes.



Word Bite



VENOM: A liquid that some snakes use to hurt or kill other animals

All Kinds of Predators

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Sharks. Wild cats. Snakes.

They're just a few of the predators that share our world.



A sea star has strong legs. They can pry open a clam's shell. What a tasty treat!



It's easy to guess how a jumping spider catches its prey. Pounce!

Predators live in many different places. And they hunt in all kinds of ways.



What in the World?

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Word Bank

peregrine falcon back fin fangs claws tongue teeth

These pictures show close-up views of predators. Use the hints below to figure out what's in the pictures.

Answers are on page 31.



1

HINT: It keeps a shark from rolling over.



2

HINT: A cheetah uses these to grip the ground.



3

HINT: A shark uses 20,000 of these in its life.



4

HINT: This predator can dive 200 miles an hour.



5

HINT: A snake uses it to smell.



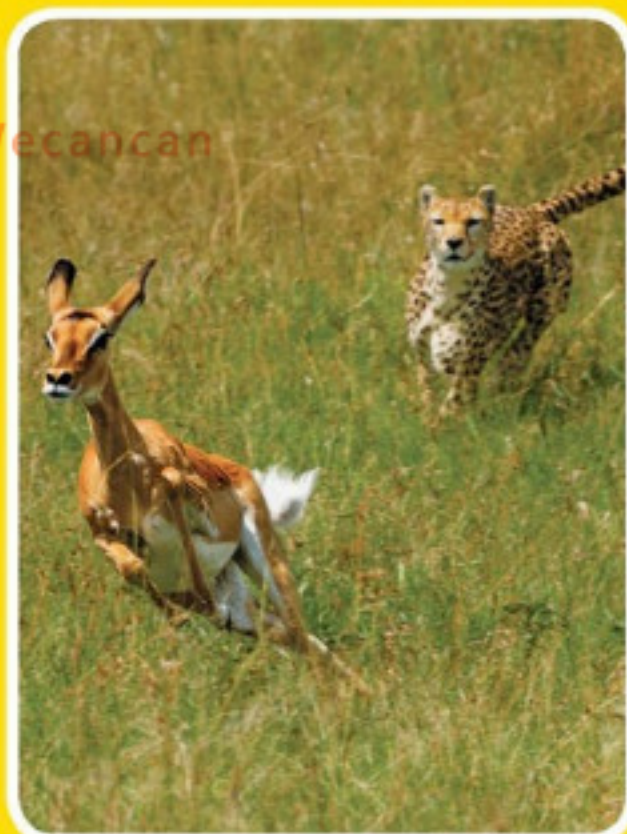
6

HINT: Venom flows through these.

Answers: 1. back fin, 2. claws, 3. teeth, 4. peregrine falcon, 5. tongue, 6. fangs



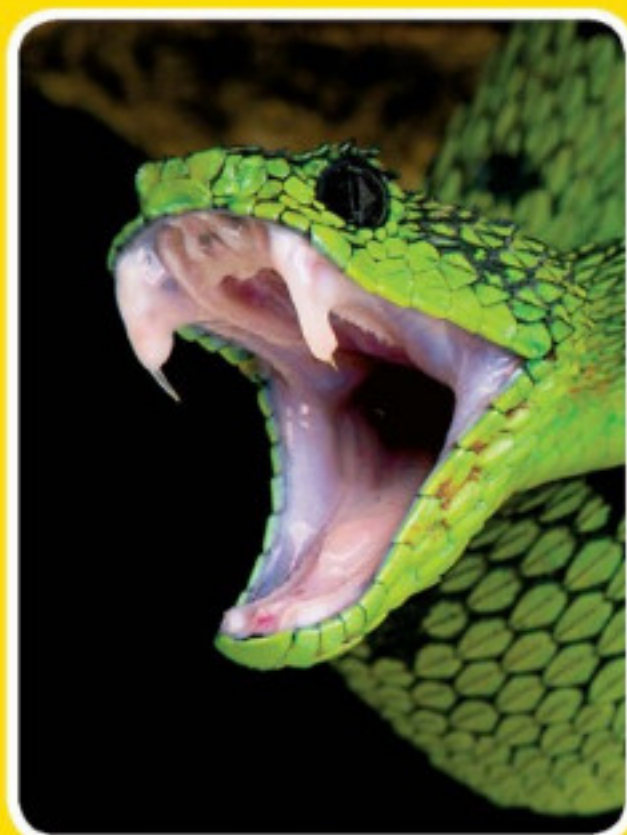
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