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The Dark Side of Fireworks

Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.



1. Fireworks are widely used to celebrate holidays, including New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day. These are the holidays you probably think of when you hear the word "fireworks," but fireworks are used more often than you may think. They are also commonly used at sporting events, concerts, and festivals and at places like theme parks.
2. Although fireworks may dazzle *some* people, they have devastating effects on animals, the environment, and even other people. It's easy to overlook those effects when we're having fun, but we have a responsibility to take care of the planet and the fellow animals we share it with.
3. Dogs, cats, and other animals who live with humans can become terrified by fireworks' loud blasts and booms. Some animals injure themselves while trying to flee, and some have even died as a result of panic or injury. It's not uncommon for dogs to jump over or dig under fences. Some even break through windows and screen doors. The animals who escape their homes can end up lost or be hit by cars. After fireworks displays, many animal shelters see a rise in the number of cats and dogs brought in.
4. Animals who live in nature already have enough reasons to be on high alert, and the added stress of deafening noise and bright lights is too much for some of them. They may flee their homes out of fear and leave behind their babies, who could starve to death or be attacked by predators. The noise from fireworks can sometimes frighten birds and other animals off their migratory paths, and they can become lost. Some of them collide with trees, telephone poles, or buildings in a panic.
5. Bright lights and loud noises aren't the only things fireworks produce. They also produce lots of pollution that harms the Earth and animals, including humans. When fireworks explode, they create smoke. The smoke contains heavy metals and chemicals that pollute the air, soil, and water and can irritate the eyes, nose, and lungs of anyone who breathes it in. Fireworks also leave behind plastic shells that fall to the ground and can cause injury or death to animals who may accidentally swallow them.

6. Not all people enjoy fireworks. Military veterans, people with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), and people with developmental conditions like autism can become terrified or experience higher levels of stress and anxiety due to fireworks. People who suffer from seizure disorders, asthma, or other health issues can be harmed as well.
7. You can help animals, the planet, and other people by making sure your family and friends never buy or use fireworks. Fortunately, laser shows and drone shows are becoming more popular and can be streamed online if you can't find one near you. They're safe for everyone and just as mesmerizing as fireworks. If fireworks displays are planned near you, here are some ways you can help animals, the environment, and people:
- *Never* take animals to fireworks displays! If you know in advance that there will be fireworks in your area, stay home with your animals and try to help them feel safe.
 - Keep cats and dogs indoors. Never leave animals tethered, chained, or roaming freely outside.
 - Close the windows and curtains or blinds and play some soothing background music or turn on the TV.
 - Make sure all your animal companions are wearing collars with current identification tags and are microchipped.
 - Create flyers that educate people about the harms of fireworks and post them around your neighborhood or leave them at stores and businesses.
 - Talk to your friends and family about why they should stop using fireworks and supporting fireworks displays.



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Comprehension Questions: The Dark Side of Fireworks

Drawing a Conclusion and Making Inferences

1. Paragraphs 1 and 2 explain to the reader that fireworks ...

- a. cause animals to become frightened and run away.
- b. can be dangerous and require adult supervision.
- c. are a fun way to celebrate holidays.
- d. may be popular during holidays but can be harmful to animals, including humans.

2. Which of the following best supports the conclusion that fireworks are harmful to animals and the environment?

- a. Fireworks are loud and bright.
- b. Fireworks cause fear and create pollution.
- c. Fireworks are used more often than you may think.
- d. Laser shows and drone shows are better alternatives.

3. Read this sentence from paragraph 2: “Although fireworks may dazzle some people, they have devastating effects on animals, the environment, and even other people.” How does the author support the information in that sentence?

- a. By explaining that fireworks are a common and popular way to celebrate holidays
- b. By explaining how people use fireworks in irresponsible ways
- c. By describing how the noise and pollution caused by fireworks are harmful
- d. By showing that fireworks are nice to look at but are too loud

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Comprehension Questions: The Dark Side of Fireworks

Main Idea

1. What is the main idea of paragraph 3?

- a. Animals are frightened by fireworks, and some of them become injured.
- b. People shouldn't attend fireworks displays.
- c. Fireworks pollute the environment.
- d. Laser shows and drone shows are replacing fireworks displays.

2. What question is answered in paragraph 7?

- a. Why do people attend fireworks shows?
- b. How are animals harmed by fireworks?
- c. Which holidays are commonly celebrated with fireworks?
- d. How can we help animals?

3. Which paragraph explains what happens to the environment when fireworks explode?

- a. 7
- b. 3
- c. 2
- d. 5

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Comprehension Questions: The Dark Side of Fireworks

Author's Purpose

1. The author wrote this article to ...

- a. encourage people to attend fireworks displays.
- b. inform the reader about the harmful effects of fireworks.
- c. recommend the best holidays to celebrate by using fireworks.
- d. explain the history of fireworks.

2. What other reason might the author have had for writing this article?

- a. To persuade people to stop buying and using fireworks
- b. To describe how fireworks explode in the air
- c. To encourage the reader to see a fireworks show
- d. To explain why it's important to use fireworks safely

3. The article would be most useful for students who want to ...

- a. report people who are using fireworks illegally.
- b. persuade people not to buy or use fireworks.
- c. write a report about which holidays are celebrated with fireworks.
- d. learn more about the history of fireworks.

Answer Key: The Dark Side of Fireworks

Comprehension Questions: Drawing a Conclusion and Making Inferences

1. d
2. b
3. c

Comprehension Questions: Main Idea

1. a
2. d
3. d

Comprehension Questions: Author's Purpose

1. b
2. a
3. b

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Delilah's Dilemma

Meet Delilah. She is a dog. She lives in a nice house with two **guardians** who take care of her, two other dogs (Ernie and Tucker), and a cat named Pippi. They all have warm beds to sleep in, a big backyard to play in, and delicious food to eat, and they get treats and lots of love. But there is one thing that troubles Delilah and puts her in a **dilemma**: fireworks.

Tonight there will be explosions that make bright lights in the sky and loud booming and banging noises. Delilah's guardians call them "fireworks," and she heard them say that some humans enjoy fireworks and use them for celebrations. But they **terrify** Delilah because she doesn't know when the next one is coming. They're so **unpredictable**! She doesn't understand why anyone would think they're fun.

To Delilah, fireworks look and sound **dangerous**, and sometimes she even feels like her *life* is in danger. She tries to hide under the bed or other furniture, but nowhere feels safe. She wants to run away to **escape** the scary lights and sounds, but running away from home can be even more dangerous. This is Delilah's dilemma.

She can hide or run away, but neither option would stop the terrifying sights and sounds. She doesn't know what to do.

BOOM! BANG! POP, POP, POP!

"Oh, no! Are those fireworks already?!" exclaims Delilah. I didn't know when they'd start, and I don't know what's going to happen. I just want this to be over. Where's the closest hiding spot? The bed is too far away, and the dining table is too open underneath. Oh, I know! The couch!"

Delilah runs as fast as she can and slides under the couch like a baseball player sliding in to home plate, almost crashing into Pippi.

"Pippi, what are you doing under the couch?" Delilah asks.

"I heard loud noises and got scared, so I ran to this hiding spot," says Pippi.

"Oh, yeah—I forgot you're scared of fireworks and you hide from them, too. Why don't Ernie and Tucker hide?" asks Delilah.

Ernie, who's lying on top of the couch Delilah and Pippi are hiding under, replies, "I don't hide from



fireworks, but that doesn't mean they don't bother me. They hurt my ears and give me a headache."

"I'm sorry," says Delilah. "I didn't realize that fireworks cause you pain. What do you two think about running away to escape from them?"

"Where I used to live, I was forced to stay outside all the time. Then I was rescued, our guardians adopted me, and they brought me to live inside this wonderful home—and I can tell you it's a lot scarier out there than it is in here," says Pippi.

"I agree with Pippi," says Ernie. "Last year, our guardians took me to the vet the day after a big fireworks show, and I met other animals who had run away from home to escape the fireworks and got into terrible accidents. One dog broke his leg trying to jump over the fence surrounding his yard, and another dog cut herself on glass while she was smashing through a window. There was a cat who had to have surgery after a car hit her because she was frantically running away from the fireworks. And there was a guardian who came in looking for his dog, who had run away after becoming scared by the fireworks. I hope they found each other."

POP, POP! BOOM! POP!

Tucker comes running full speed down the hallway and slides on the slick floor as he rounds the corner, almost colliding with the couch where the other three are gathered.

"BARK, BARK, BARK! I think someone is trying to break into our house," Tucker exclaims. "Did you hear that noise? It sounded like someone was trying to break the door down!"

Ernie sticks his head under a couch pillow. "Can you please stop barking? My ears already hurt from the fireworks, and your barking is making my headache worse. No one is trying to break into our house. It's just fireworks."

"Sorry," whispers Tucker, "but I'm on high alert! Loud noises make me feel **anxious** because they sound threatening, so I bark to warn our guardians that danger could be near. Where are they, anyway?"

"Well, Pippi and I feel scared," says Delilah, "and your barking isn't helping. Plus, you're making Ernie's headache worse."

"Sorry," Tucker replies. "I hear loud noises and I bark. I can't help it, just like you and Pippi can't help feeling scared and Ernie can't help it that his ears and head hurt from loud noises."

"Well, I was thinking about running away to escape the fireworks, but Pippi and Ernie think that's a bad idea," Delilah says.

She looks at Tucker and asks, "What do you think? Will you go with me so I don't have to go alone?"

"I must agree with Pippi and Ernie," Tucker responds. "If we run away, who's going to protect our house

and our guardians? They would be very worried about us if we just disappeared! Besides, if you think the fireworks are scary here, you would be even more scared out there because the sounds are louder and the lights are brighter.”

Delilah becomes lost in thought.

“Hmm. Tucker, Ernie, and Pippi all have good points. If I ran away, I would be in danger of becoming injured or lost—and it *would* be even scarier outside than it is in here. I wouldn’t have the protection of my house, and my guardians would worry about me. But if I stay here, I’m still going to be scared. Hiding under the furniture only helps for a short time, and then I feel scared again. How do I solve my dilemma?” she wonders to herself.

“We’re home!” announce their guardians as they walk in the front door. “We’re sorry we didn’t get back before the fireworks started.”

They talk to each other across the room as they put their shopping bags down.

“I can’t believe how many people showed up last week to ask the town officials to stop using fireworks. Turns out we’re not the only ones who don’t enjoy them!”

“Hopefully next year they’ll switch to a laser show, which wouldn’t be noisy or scary or create pollution.”

They both turn to their furry friends, and one says, “Until then, we brought you all some new calming treats to try and new toys to play with!”

The guardians walk around the house and close all the curtains and blinds, and they turn the TV to a channel playing soothing music.

“We know this won’t fix the problem, but it will help. Tonight, we’re going to stay home with the four of you and try to make you feel safe during the loud, scary noises.”

Fireworks boom in the distance, and the animals’ guardians grab the remote and turn the volume up a bit. They walk over to Delilah, who comes out from under the couch to greet them, and they wrap her in a hug.

Delilah smiles. “I feel better already.”



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Comprehension Questions: 'Delilah's Dilemma'

1. Why can't Delilah solve her dilemma on her own? Who does she need help from and why?

2. Using information from "The Dark Side of Fireworks" and "Delilah's Dilemma," what are three things that could help Delilah with her dilemma?

3. Why did Delilah feel scared? Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt scared? Explain any similarities between your feelings and Delilah's feelings.

4. What would it take for Delilah's dilemma to be solved completely?

Key Vocabulary

guardian	someone who takes care of someone else
dilemma	when you must choose between two or more things, none of which seem better than the others
terrify	to scare someone very much or fill them with great fear
unpredictable	something that happens unexpectedly and can't be planned on
dangerous	likely to cause harm, not safe
escape	a way of getting away from something that could harm you
anxious	afraid of or nervous about what could happen

Answer Key: ‘Delilah’s Dilemma’

Please note that students must read “The Dark Side of Fireworks” to answer question 2.

1. Why can’t Delilah solve her dilemma on her own? Who does she need help from and why?

Possible answer: Delilah can’t solve her dilemma on her own because she has no control over her surroundings. She needs help from her guardians because they have more control over her surroundings. (Inferential)

2. Using information from “The Dark Side of Fireworks” and “Delilah’s Dilemma,” what are three things that could help Delilah with her dilemma?

Answer: (1) It would help Delilah if her guardians stayed home instead of going to watch fireworks. (2) It would help Delilah if her guardians gave her treats and toys to take her mind off the scary noises. (3) Closing the blinds and curtains and turning the TV on to drown out the noise from the fireworks would help Delilah. (Literal)

3. Why did Delilah feel scared? Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt scared? Explain any similarities between your feelings and Delilah’s feelings.

Answer: Delilah felt scared because she didn’t know whether the loud noises were dangerous or when they were going to happen next. She felt like her life was in danger. (Literal)

(The remaining answers are inferential and will vary depending on students’ experiences.)

4. What would it take for Delilah’s dilemma to be solved completely?

Possible answer: The only way for Delilah’s dilemma to be solved completely would be for everyone to stop setting off fireworks. (Inferential)