

Name: _____ Date: _____

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Vocabulary:

"Saving America's Wolves"

1. apex predator (EY-peks PRED-uh-ter) *noun*; An apex is the top or highest point of something. The apex of a mountain is its peak. A predator is an animal that kills and eats other animals.

An apex predator is at the top of a food web and is not preyed upon by any other animal. Sharks, grizzly bears, and wolves are examples of apex predators.

2. despise (dih-SPAHYZ) *verb*; *Despise* means "to strongly dislike and disapprove of someone or something." Imagine you ask Ray if he wants olives on his pizza. He says, "Ugh. The mere sight of olives makes me shudder. I don't like olives to be in the same *room* as my pizza!" You can conclude that Ray despises olives.

3. ecosystem (EE-koh-sis-tuhm) *noun*; An ecosystem is all of the living and nonliving things in a particular environment. A pond's ecosystem, for example, includes the plants, animals, bacteria, and water in the pond, as well as the soil at the bottom of the pond and the sunlight and rainfall that the pond receives. Each part plays an important role in helping the system function.

4. endangered (ehn-DEYN-jerd) *adjective*; *Endangered* means "at risk of dying out." *Endangered* is most often used to describe a species of plant or animal that is at serious risk of becoming extinct. One of the main reasons many species are endangered today is habitat loss.

5. hierarchy (HAHY-uh-rahr-kee) *noun*; A hierarchy is a system in which people or things are ranked according to their status, power, or importance. If Karen started out as a cadet in the army and now she is a general, she has moved up through the army's hierarchy.

6. keystone species (KEE-stohn SPEE-sheez) *noun*; In a curved stone arch, the stone at the very center of the top is called the keystone. The keystone is the most important stone in the arch because if you take it out, the whole arch will become weak and might fall down.

Keystone can be used to refer to the most important part of anything—the part that everything else depends on. A *keystone species* is a plant or animal that is necessary for an ecosystem to function; if you remove a keystone species, an ecosystem will drastically change or disappear altogether.

Keystone species are often predators or apex predators, but not always. For example, elephants are a keystone species. Because elephants eat and pull up small trees, grass is able to thrive. If you were to take away the elephants, the land would change in a big way: Instead of being grassy, it would become covered in trees and bushes. This change would affect many other plant and animal species in the ecosystem.

7. stalk (stawk) *verb*; To stalk is to slowly and quietly follow a person or an animal that you are hunting or trying to catch.

8. tranquilizer (TRANG-kwuh-lahy-zer) *noun*; The adjective *tranquil* (TRANG-kwil) means "peaceful, quiet, and calm."

The verb *tranquilize* (TRANG-kwuh-lahyz) means "to make or become tranquil." The gentle tinkling of a wind chime might tranquilize your mind.

A tranquilizer is a drug used to make a person or an animal calm, sleepy, or unconscious for a short time. If a bear is in a place that is not safe for it to be, a wildlife ranger might use a tranquilizer to put the bear to sleep so that it can safely be moved to another location.

Directions: In the space below or on the back of this page, list any other words from the article whose definitions you are not sure about. For each word, use context clues to try to figure out the meaning. Then look up the word in a few different dictionaries. Discuss the meaning of the word with your teacher or another adult. Then write a definition for the word and one example sentence using the word.

Vocabulary Practice

"Saving America's Wolves"

Directions: Fill in the circle next to the best answer to each question.

1. Which person despises mayonnaise?

- Ⓐ Kristina, who drenches her fries in mayonnaise
- Ⓑ Steph, who refuses to touch any dish that has mayonnaise as an ingredient

2. Which animal is an apex predator?

- Ⓐ a lion
- Ⓑ a caterpillar

3. Which of the following species is endangered?

- Ⓐ the Bengal tiger, which is at risk of dying out because of hunting and habitat loss
- Ⓑ the mosquito, which is thriving and has high population numbers

4. Which animal is stalking something?

- Ⓐ Fred, a cat who is very quietly and stealthily following a mouse through the backyard
- Ⓑ Roger, a dog who is barking and running after a squirrel

5. Which would have a stronger effect on an ecosystem?

- Ⓐ playing a song on a guitar
- Ⓑ a forest fire

Directions: Rewrite each sentence using a form of one of the words in the box. There is one word you will not use.

hierarchy stalk keystone species tranquilizer
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6. To help her remove a thorn from the gorilla's hand, the veterinarian gave the gorilla a medicine that relaxed him.

7. In the ranks of a school, the principal has the most authority.

8. Tiger sharks are an extremely important species. If they disappear, the whole ocean will suffer.
