

Mandatory Summer Reading

Students Entering 7th Grade

Student Name:

- 1) Read **one** of the following books and be prepared to complete a project on the book when you return to school. You will also be required to fill out the attached graphic organizer (Story Map) for the book that you choose.

Title	Lexile Level
<i>Good Night, Mr. Tom</i> by Michelle Magorian	760L
<i>Nobody's Daughter</i> by Susan Pfeffer	750L
<i>North by Night</i> by Katherine Ayers	750L
<i>The Dark is Rising</i> by Susan Cooper	920L
<i>Bearstone</i> by Will Hobbs	780L

- 2) Read a minimum of **two** Accelerated Reader (AR) books that are within your ZPD range. Record the title of the books you read here, and have your parent sign and date when you complete the book.

Book Title & ZPD Range	Date Completed	Parent Signature

Your end-of-year ZPD range is: _____

- 1) Read the article "A Very Big Snake". Complete questions # 1 -10 following the passage.
- 2) Read the article "The Largest Snake in the World Has Invaded the United States". Fill in the Cause and Effect worksheet using information from the article.
- 3) Write two paragraphs making a prediction...What will happen to the population of the anaconda in Florida in the years to come. Use facts from both articles to help support your prediction. Write your paragraphs on a separate piece of paper and attach them to the article

When you return to school, you should give your ELA teacher the AR Reading Log and the following:

- Basic Literary Elements Chart (for the book of your choice)
- Questions from "A Very Big Snake"
- Cause and Effect (for "The Largest Snake in the World Has Invaded the United States")
- 2 Paragraphs (for "The Largest Snake in the World Has Invaded the United States")

Be prepared to complete a project about the book you chose!

Name _____

Date _____

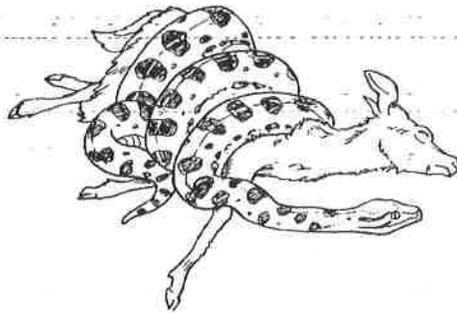
Directions: Read "A Very Big Snake." Then answer questions 1–10.

A Very Big Snake

When biologist Dr. Jesus Rivas goes looking for South America's largest snake, he takes off his shoes and socks. Using his bare feet is the best way to feel for the anaconda's texture and shape as it lurks in swampy jungles or rivers with shallow water. Rivas must know what he's doing. He has caught and measured more than 900 of the giant reptiles.

Anacondas may grow 25 to 30 feet long and weigh up to 500 pounds. The anaconda is usually considered the world's biggest snake. Its chief rival for the title is the reticulated python of Asia. The longest python ever captured measured 33 feet, which is a bit longer than the largest anaconda ever found. But the anaconda wins the prize for biggest circumference. Its long body can be as big around as an adult man.

Some snakes kill by poisoning their victims with their fangs. Constrictors kill by wrapping their bodies around prey and squeezing it. Both anacondas and pythons are constrictors. Anacondas use their teeth to hold onto prey and keep it from escaping until they can swallow it.



The anaconda hunts mostly by lying in a river or shallow pool. Its head barely breaks the surface—just enough so it can breathe. There it waits for birds, deer, rodents, jaguars, and even other snakes to come for a drink. Fish and reptiles are completely acceptable food, too. The anaconda climbs as well as it swims, and so it sometimes hides in trees. Since this big snake can't move very fast, it stays extremely still. It relies on surprise to get its dinner. It sometimes drags prey under water to drown it and then swallows the animal whole.

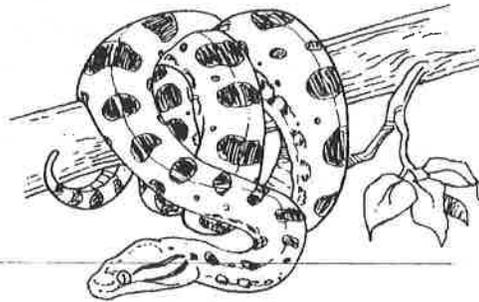
Name _____

Date _____

Big Dinner

The snake's mouth is hinged to swing wide open, like a gate. Its jaws are joined by stretchy ligaments rather than bone. A snake's body is mostly one long ribcage. Snakes have no breastbone, though, so the ribs are not joined on the belly side. This lets a large meal slide through the digestive tract without getting stuck anywhere.

The anaconda has greenish brown scales with black spots. These scales cover a stretchy skin. When the anaconda's body is swollen with a meal, the scales spread out so they look like widely spaced spots on the stretched-out skin. Like many other snakes, the anaconda can digest bone, eggshells, and teeth. But the process may take a while. If you came upon an anaconda right after it swallowed a large meal, you might have to wait a few weeks to see it move.



Smelling With Its Tongue

An anaconda's nostrils are on top of the head, so it can breathe without bringing its head totally out of the water. But snakes don't smell with their nostrils. All snakes use their tongues to smell. That's why they always flick their tongues out: they are sampling the air in their environment. A special organ in the roof of the mouth acts like the inside of a person's nose. The snake touches its tongue to this sense organ so the brain can read the smell signals.

Snakes are much more common in warm places than in cold because they cannot keep themselves warm. Rivers such as the Orinoco and the Amazon in steamy Venezuela and Brazil are ideal homes for anacondas and other large snakes.

Like other snakes, the anaconda cannot hear. But it does have an "ear" bone near the jaw that picks up vibrations in the ground. Deafness might be a problem for a smaller animal, but not many animals bother a snake this big.

Name _____ Date _____

Snake Wrestler

Anacondas are as beautiful as they are terrifying. As a boy in Venezuela, Jesus Rivas was struck by the beauty of them and other local wildlife. As a scientist, Dr. Rivas has made it his job to find out as much as he can about the anaconda. First he finds a snake. Then he wrestles it until the snake is so tired that it can be subdued. That usually takes 15 or 20 minutes. Rivas then restrains the snake or moves it to a place where he can take blood and tissue samples before letting it go.

Rivas has already discovered many interesting things about the anaconda. For one, the females are about five times as large as the males. When they mate, the female lets the male wrap its tail around her. Some snakes lay eggs, but anacondas give birth to live young. Their parenthood doesn't last long, though. Within a short time, the young are off hunting their own food.

Name _____

Date _____

Questions 1-10: Choose the best answer to each question, or write your answer on the lines provided.

1. According to the article, why is the Amazon River area an ideal place for anacondas?

- (A) It is warm and steamy.
- (B) Few people live there.
- (C) It has many large trees.
- (D) The water is very clear.

2. Which sentence from the article states an opinion?

- (A) The females are about five times as large as the males.
- (B) Anacondas are as beautiful as they are terrifying.
- (C) Some snakes kill by poisoning their victims with their fangs.
- (D) The anaconda has greenish brown scales with black spots.

3. Describe two times when an anaconda might lie very still. Explain why it is not moving in each instance. (4 points)

Name _____

Date _____

4. How are anacondas and pythons alike?

- (A) Both live in Asia.
- (B) Both poison their victims.
- (C) Both move very fast.
- (D) Both are constrictors.

5. "Its chief rival for the title is the reticulated python of Asia."

What does the word rival mean as it is used in this sentence?

- (A) ruler
- (B) author
- (C) challenger
- (D) enemy

6. Where in Asia would you expect to find the reticulated python: high mountains, snow-covered plains, or warm swamps? Give a reason to support your answer. (2 points)

7. What clue in the article suggests that Dr. Jesus Rivas is probably very strong?

- (A) He works in bare feet.
- (B) He wrestles with large snakes.
- (C) He lives in South America.
- (D) He wades through swampy wetlands.

Name _____ Date _____

- 8. "Constrictors kill by wrapping their bodies around prey and squeezing it."**

Which word could best replace the word squeezing in this sentence?

- (A) crowding
- (B) hugging
- (C) crushing
- (D) pinching

- 9. According to this article, the anaconda senses smells through its —**

- (A) nostrils.
- (B) teeth.
- (C) ears.
- (D) tongue.

- 10. Suppose you learned that very few snake researchers have seen an anaconda in the wild. What would be the most likely reason for this?**

- (A) Anacondas are not as interesting to study as some other snakes.
- (B) Anacondas live mostly in the water and are hard to find.
- (C) Most snake researchers live in cold climates.
- (D) People who study snakes don't visit South America.

The Largest Snake in the World Has Invaded the United States

By [Jackson Landers](#)

The Florida Everglades.

On a muggy day about 10 years ago in the Florida Everglades, Jack Shealy was riding his bike along a dirt road leading into the Trail Lakes Campground, where he has worked for decades. Like any good gladesman, Shealy has a substantial portion of his brain wired to recognize snakes in places where the rest of us would see only leaves and shadows. He skidded to a stop at the sight of a serpentine form stretched out in the sun.

This particular snake was not especially large—only about a meter in length. Yet the color was something different. Greenish brown with dark, oval spots. This was not a snake that belonged in the Everglades. Shealy did something that comes naturally to the family. (His nephew Jack M. Shealy [recently became notorious for jumping into the water](#) to wrestle an invasive Burmese python.) He jumped off of the bike and captured the angry snake by hand.

Trail Lakes Campground just happened to have a herpetologist on staff. Rick Scholle, who runs the campground's roadside zoo, examined the snake and realized that he was looking at a juvenile green anaconda. A nonvenomous constrictor native to South America, the green anaconda is the biggest, heaviest species of snake in the world. It *definitely* does not belong in the Florida Everglades.

I met Shealy and Scholle while I was on an expedition in February to [hunt invasive Burmese pythons](#) in the Everglades. The Burmese pythons have become a well-publicized problem, but once I got down there and started spending time with the fishermen, bikers, reformed gator poachers, tour guides, smugglers, and biologists who inhabit the sparsely populated southern Glades, I found that the situation wasn't everything it was made out to be on the evening news. The pythons were less of a problem than the media had made them out to be. And many other invasive species were crawling around without receiving nearly as much attention.

Hanging out with other python hunters, I realized within a few days that the vast majority of pythons had been captured by locals who just happen to bump into them while doing other things. Those locals see a lot of other weird things out there in the swamp. This is, after all, the home of [the legendary skunk ape](#). Most people who think that they spot a skunk ape tend to keep the news to themselves for fear of sounding crazy, and until recently they felt the same way when they caught sight of a strange green snake big enough to swallow a Great Dane.

I had a long conversation about green anacondas with Scholle one morning while he showed me the live 15-foot specimen in his own collection. The anaconda that Shealy had brought to him 10 years previously had refused to eat in captivity and died within a few months—which suggests the snake may have been born in the wild. Another green anaconda was later captured in the

Everglades and given to Scholle. That snake gave birth to the behemoth wrapped around Scholle's body as he spoke to me.

He pointed out that the Burmese pythons, as bad as their invasion seems, face a constraint on their numbers that the green anaconda doesn't. The Everglades are riddled with another invasive species that has conquered most of the Gulf Coast: fire ants. Fire ants were brought to Gulf of Mexico ports accidentally by cargo ships from South America. They are notorious for attacking in swarms with extremely painful stings. Most ants have a bit of formic acid in their bite, but the fire ant also has a stinger equipped with a necrotizing venom.

Normally an animal stung by a fire ant will flee and survive. But creatures that can't or won't move away are at risk of being swarmed, killed, and eaten. Newborn calves are sometimes killed by fire ants before they can get to their feet. Burmese pythons are sometimes at a similar disadvantage. The females spend several months each year guarding their eggs by wrapping their bodies around them and defending against any would-be egg thieves. This places the python—and her leathery eggs—at risk of attack by marauding ants.

One Burmese python at Trail Lakes, captured in the wild and kept in a large outdoor enclosure, was swarmed by fire ants that tunneled up from beneath her while she guarded her eggs. By the end of the day she and her brood had been reduced to little more than scales and bones. Given the ubiquity of fire ants in the Everglades, it's imaginable that the ants are limiting the population growth of the pythons.

The green anaconda does not have this problem. Unlike its smaller relative, the anaconda gives birth to live young rather than laying eggs. It can easily slither away from fire ant bites. What's more, the anaconda would be less likely to encounter fire ants in the first place. Unlike the Burmese pythons, which are found on land and in trees as often as in the water, the green anaconda is an almost wholly aquatic snake. Perhaps this is why the green anaconda can afford to be about 50 percent heavier than a python of the same length. All of that enormous bulk is borne by the water most of the time.

Really large anacondas are rarely reported by white people, but African-Americans who live in or near the Everglades tell stranger stories. White people there usually go fishing the same way that I do—noisily and conspicuously. Standing up, constantly casting, and moving along to new spots when nothing is happening. But African-Americans of the Everglades have different fishing traditions. They sit very still and quietly along the water for a very long time with a piece of live or cut bait under a bobber. Waiting. When you wait quietly in nature that way, you tend to see things that other people don't see. Like a great green and black snake as big around as a Hula Hoop, gliding slowly and smoothly past you through the dark water, so close you could almost touch it.

These stories of what could be record-breaking snakes are impossible to substantiate. Eyewitnesses are usually alone, and everything grows in a fisherman's recollections. In most environments, a snake that large would be difficult to hide. But in the Everglades, living almost entirely in the water, a number of snakes large enough to swallow a man could spend their whole lives without ever being photographed or captured.

It is impossible to contemplate a snake so large without wondering whether it *would* swallow a human. The evidence for this ever having happened anywhere in the world is sketchy, but then again I suspect that the anacondas haven't been filing their reports diligently and the victims have also been slow to talk.

Green anacondas haven't gained much attention as an invasive species, but the state of Florida has become concerned enough about them that photos for identification were included in the study guide that I was assigned before participating in the "Python Challenge" hunting contest. Based on the specimens that people I've spoken to have collected, I am convinced that a breeding population of anacondas has become established. The questions are how many there are and how big they can really get.

In the long run, anacondas make the Burmese pythons look like garter snakes. Between their advantage over fire ants, sneaky aquatic lifestyle, and sheer size that discourages even the largest of alligators from messing with them, the green anaconda could eventually prove to be the biggest problem in the United States' wildest place.

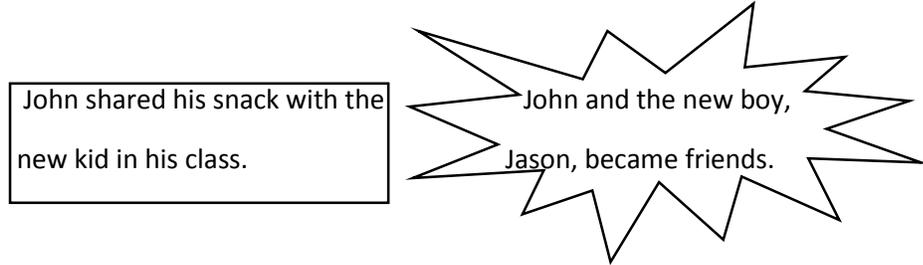
Basic Literary Elements Chart

Characters	Setting	Conflict	Theme
Protagonists:	Time:	Who is involved:	Overall message or lesson of the story:
Antagonist:	Place:	Type of conflict:	

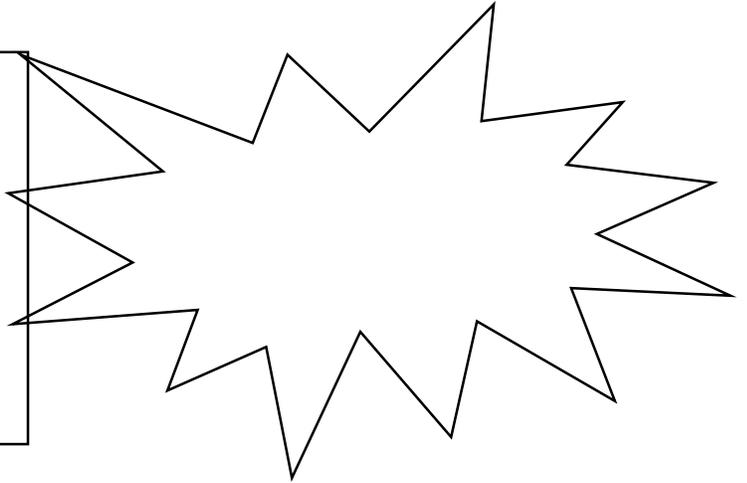
Name _____

Cause & Effect Graphic Organizer

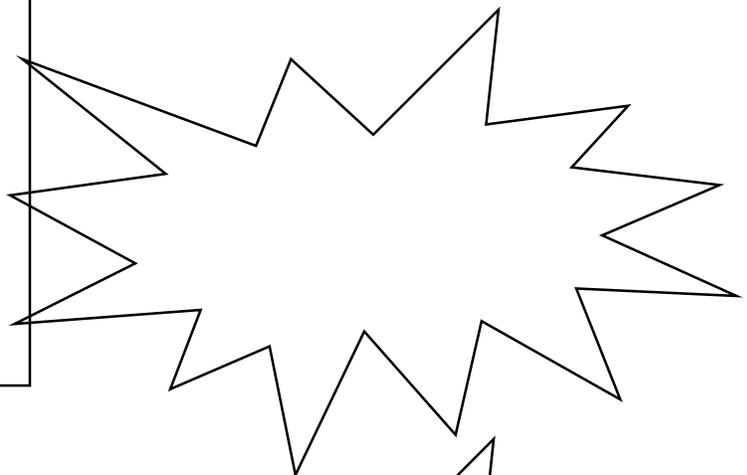
From the article "The Largest Snake in the World Has Invaded the United States", find 3 examples of cause and effect. All answers should be in full sentences. For example:



1)



2)



3)

