

Directions: Read this story carefully. When you are completely finished answer the questions on the next page. Make sure to completely fill in the bubbles

The Walrus—A Tool Kit on His Face

Walruses are giant sea mammals. These giants look like their cousins, the seals. Both of these sea mammals have flippers instead of hands. They use the flippers to swim through the water at speeds up to 20 miles an hour. Every walrus also has two important tools that help it live without hands. These tools are its whiskers and its tusks.

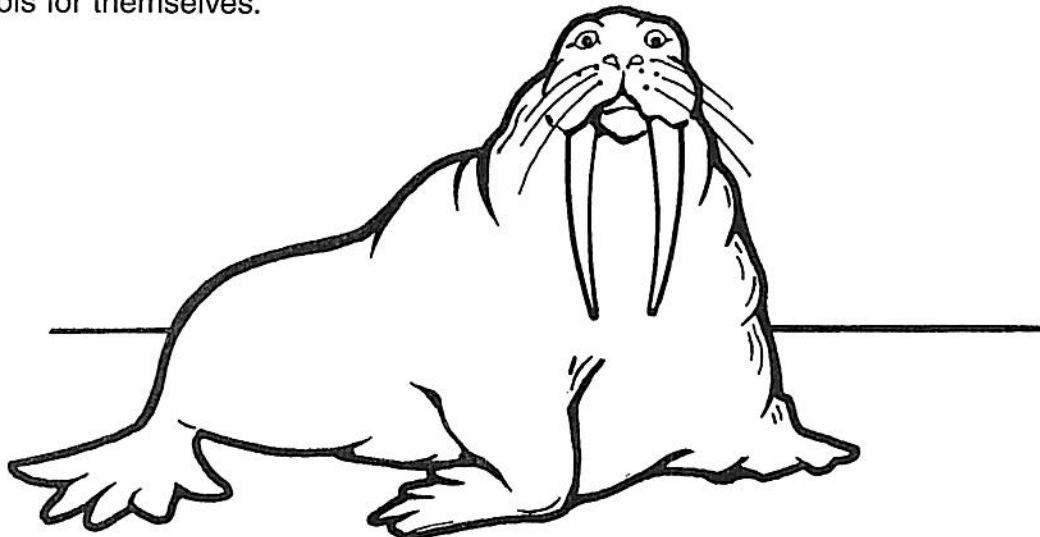
Walruses have special whiskers called vibrissae. Unlike normal hair, these whiskers can really feel things. The walruses hunt in deep water. Light from the sun doesn't shine that deep. This means walruses have to find food in the dark. They use their vibrissae to feel for clams and other small creatures to eat.

Walruses have another tool. They have tusks like elephants. They use these tusks in many ways. Walruses live in the arctic where the water is cold. They dive deep in the cold water to hunt for clams. Between dives, they sun themselves to get warm. The only way to get warm is by lying on chunks of sea ice. But walruses can weigh 1,000 pounds. How can these giant animals get out of the water and onto the ice? They use their tusks. They stick their heads out of the water and plant their tusks in the ice like an ice ax. Then they pull themselves out of the water. That takes some pretty strong neck muscles.

Tusks are used for protection, too. Walruses live in large groups. They sit together to keep warm, but sometimes they fight for space. The walrus with the biggest tusks usually wins. The tusks are also useful for chasing off polar bears. Polar bears are good hunters, but the bears usually leave walruses alone because of their tusks.

People used to think that walruses used their tusks to dig for clams. Now people know that this is not true. Walruses fill their mouths with water. Then they squirt the water at the clam. This powerful stream of water moves the sand away from the clam so the walrus can eat it.

Walrus tusks are made out of ivory. People used to hunt walruses for this ivory. Ivory was carved into statues or tools. Today walruses are protected from hunters and get to keep their special tools for themselves.



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1. What are tusks used for?
 - (a) Tusks are used to help walruses get onto the ice.
 - (b) They help walruses warm themselves in the sun.
 - (c) They are used to help walruses see underwater.
 - (d) Tusks are used to dig for clams.
2. What do whiskers do?
 - (a) They help the walrus move sand away from clams.
 - (b) They help the walrus swim through the water at a fast speed.
 - (c) They help the walrus feel for clams and other small creatures to eat.
 - (d) They help the walrus fight for space on the ice.
3. The first paragraph answers which of the following questions?
 - (a) Why do walruses fill their mouths with water?
 - (b) How do walruses keep warm?
 - (c) What does a walrus look like?
 - (d) How are walruses like elephants?
4. You can tell that the writer of the passage thinks that walruses are—
 - (a) boring.
 - (b) cute.
 - (c) ugly.
 - (d) interesting.
5. The writer wrote this passage to show that—
 - (a) polar bears usually leave walruses alone.
 - (b) people hunt walruses for their tusks.
 - (c) walruses live in the arctic, where it is very cold.
 - (d) walruses have special tools that help them to live without hands.