

Dog Cousins

by Arthur C. Miller



- 1 What has forty-two teeth, a long snout, fur, and a tail and can be found all over the United States? Is it a fox? Is it a wolf? Maybe it's a coyote. Actually, it is all three. Foxes, wolves, and coyotes are all related. They are also related to your pet dog.
- 2 Foxes, wolves, and coyotes are alike in many ways. They all can be found in cities, suburbs, and rural areas all across the United States. They prefer forests and fields but may even be living in your neighborhood. Even though foxes, wolves, and coyotes are all nocturnal, you may occasionally see them hunting during the day. They are all carnivorous, and so they hunt rabbits, squirrels, mice, rats, birds, frogs, and other animals. They are all intelligent.
- 3 The smallest of these animals are the foxes. While there are five different kinds of foxes in North America, the red fox and the gray fox are the most common. Foxes live in dens. Sometimes they dig these themselves, and sometimes they use dens that have been abandoned by other burrowing animals such as woodchucks or badgers. Foxes give birth once a year, usually in March or April. A baby fox is called a kit. When the kits are only nine weeks old, they begin to hunt with their parents.
- 4 Red foxes are bigger than gray foxes, but you cannot tell the difference between the two foxes by their color. A red fox may be gray and a gray fox may be a reddish color. The way to tell them apart is by the tip of the tail. The tip of a red fox's tail is white.
- 5 Both red and gray foxes are very fast. They can run up to twenty-six miles per hour, which is good because they don't usually like to fight. If being fast isn't enough to help a gray fox escape, it can just climb a tree!
- 6 Coyotes are different from foxes in many ways. They are bigger than foxes but smaller than wolves. Coyotes may weigh between twenty and thirty-five pounds, while a fox may weigh only seven to fifteen pounds. A wolf, on the other hand, can weigh anywhere from forty-five to 175 pounds. Coyotes make a lot of noise. They howl and yap, mostly at night. Like foxes, coyotes can dig burrows but often use abandoned burrows that they make bigger. Coyote babies are called pups. Usually, two to twelve pups are born at one time. They are considered full grown in one year.
- 7 Wolves are the biggest of the three animals, but they are also considered endangered in most states. Wolves tend to live and hunt in packs made up of five to nine animals, but if food is plentiful the pack may be larger. There is always a pair of leaders, one male and one female. Wolves communicate with their bodies and their voices. If a wolf comes near a pack it doesn't belong to and acts like it is in charge, it will end up in a fight with the pack leader. Wolves have five to fourteen babies in a litter. These babies are also called pups. The pups are taken care of by both parents and stay with the pack for about two years. Then they must go out and find their own territory to live in.
- 8 As humans take up more and more room, foxes, coyotes, and wolves find themselves with less and less area to roam. However, although we may change the environment, the foxes, coyotes, and wolves are proof that some animals can adapt to survive.

COMPREHENSION

A Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1 The first part of the story is mainly about
 - a foxes.
 - b coyotes.
 - c wolves.
- 2 A wolf may end up in a fight if it
 - a smells funny.
 - b makes a pack leader feel threatened.
 - c tries to leave the pack.
- 3 Foxes, coyotes, and wolves are being seen more often because
 - a they are not afraid of people.

- b they like living around people.
 - c human beings are taking up their living space.

- 4 You can tell wolves are social animals because they
 - a live and hunt in packs.
 - b have five to fourteen pups in a litter.
 - c are endangered.
- 5 Since some animals have to adapt to survive, we can conclude that
 - a humankind is changing their environment.
 - b animals like to change.
 - c the animals are changing the environment.

LEARN ABOUT WORDS

B Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1 muzzle; nose and jaws (1)
- 2 active at night (2)
- 3 meat eater (2)
- 4 digging (3)
- 5 to get away (5)
- 6 deserted; no longer lived in (6)
- 7 to wander around (8)

C A word may have more than one meaning. Its meaning will depend on how it is used.

The *fly* buzzed around the room.
The bird will *fly* to its nest.

Look at each word in **bold type** below. Note the paragraph number. Look back at the paragraph. Which meaning does the word have there? Write *a* or *b*.

8 pet (1)

- a an animal kept for fun and companionship
- b to stroke in a gentle way

9 tip (4)

- a to knock over
- b the end of a pointed object

10 litter (7)

- a trash scattered about
- b group of baby animals born at the same time

THINK ABOUT IT

D A word that has the opposite, or nearly the opposite, meaning of another word is called an antonym. *Little* is an antonym of *big*.

Read each sentence. Which word in parentheses () is an antonym of the word in **bold type**? Write the word.

- 1 Wild dogs **prefer** to live in forests and fields.
(choose, dislike)
- 2 Wolves are especially **intelligent**.
(smart, stupid)
- 3 Packs of animals are larger when food is **plentiful**.
(scarce, abundant)
- 4 Wolves are **larger** than either foxes or coyotes.
(smaller, bigger)
- 5 Red foxes are the most **common** fox in the United States.
(widespread, rare)

E A word was left out of each sentence. Look at the two words in **bold type**. Which word best completes the sentence? Write the word.

- 6 Cubs, puppies, and _____ are baby animals.
kittens hens
- 7 Some wild creatures live in nests, burrows, or _____.
dens houses

8 Foxes, dogs, and _____ have four legs.

rabbits chickens

9 Different kinds of things are kept in _____, warehouses, and barns.

boxes garages

10 Trees, _____, and wildflowers grow in forests.

moss seaweed

F One word in the following row doesn't belong with the others.

chickens ducks ~~foxes~~

Chickens and ducks are birds. Foxes are not birds. *Foxes* is the word that doesn't belong.

Which word doesn't belong in each row? Write the word.

- | | | | |
|----|---------|---------------|----------|
| 11 | pups | kittens | chickens |
| 12 | forest | apartment | field |
| 13 | bobcats | wolves | foxes |
| 14 | yap | howl | listen |
| 15 | burrows | neighborhoods | dens |