

LIONS IN THE HOUSE

by William Bridges



1 Someone once asked the animal doctor at the Bronx Zoo in New York if he could tell in a few words some differences between an animal doctor and the kind of doctor who treats people.

2 The doctor thought for a while. Then he said that the two kinds of doctors do much the same work. However, their patients are very different. That makes their lives a lot different.

- 3 "For example, doctors who take care of people don't take their patients home with them at night," he said. "And they don't keep them in a box in the kitchen. I've done that with some of my patients."
- 4 The doctor was thinking of two baby lions that were born at the zoo. They needed special care because their mother wouldn't take care of them.
- 5 Sometimes zoo lionesses are not very good mothers. They get nervous and cannot care for their babies. The noise made by the zoo visitors seems to bother them.
- 6 When Jennie the lioness had her first cubs, she was so upset that she didn't even want to be in the same cage with her babies. So if the cubs were going to be kept warm and fed regularly, the doctor was going to have to do it.
- 7 Feeding the little lions was simple enough. The doctor spread a soft towel on a table in his office and placed the cubs on it. Then he offered them each a bottle of warm milk. They seized the rubber nipples and began drinking with very little coaxing. It was almost too easy. The only trouble was that the babies would have to be fed every three hours during the night. That meant the doctor would have to take the lion cubs home with him. He was worried about what his wife would think if he brought home a couple of lions—even baby ones.
- 8 He needn't have worried. The cubs wouldn't have frightened anyone. They weighed just three pounds each. Their eyes were tightly closed. They were simply helpless little balls of fur. The doctor's wife liked them so much that she wanted to do the feeding that night. The next morning, when the doctor started to take them back to the zoo, she begged him to let her keep them for a few days. So the doctor made two little beds for them. He took cardboard boxes and lined them with blankets, and he put the boxes in the kitchen.

- 9 It worked out very well. The doctor's wife had never taken care of lion cubs before. However, she had helped her Irish terrier Gussie raise a litter of pups. She thought that the two lion cubs couldn't possibly be any more trouble than Irish terrier puppies. The lion cubs were not any trouble. They had to be fed every three hours. However, the rest of the time they slept or played gently with each other.
- 10 When the cubs were two months old, the director at the zoo began asking the doctor when he was going to bring them back. He wanted to put the cubs on show.
- 11 "Oh, I'll bring them back one of these days," the doctor would say. "But first they have to learn how to take care of themselves better."
- 12 The fact was that the doctor's wife was having so much fun with the cubs that she didn't want him to take the cubs back to the zoo.
- 13 One afternoon one of her friends dropped in for a surprise visit. Usually, when she knew visitors were coming, the doctor's wife locked the cubs in one of the bedrooms. She had to do this because of a game they liked to play. They liked to jump out from behind a chair or a door and chew on people's ankles.
- 14 This afternoon, though, the cubs happened to be right behind the front door when the friend opened it. They jumped for her feet, and each one grabbed an ankle. They didn't really hurt the woman, but they did tear her stockings. Plus they nearly scared the wits out of her.
- 15 So the next morning the lion cubs were brought back to the zoo.
- 16 When asked the question about how doctors who treat people and doctors who treat animals are different, the zoo doctor could have answered: "The difference between a zoo doctor and the other kind is that sometimes the zoo doctor's patients bite people on the ankle."

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COMPREHENSION

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

- 1 The main idea in this story is that
 - a** a zoo doctor's job can be very difficult.
 - b** doctoring animals is different from doctoring people.
 - c** lion cubs should never be raised at home.
- 2 The doctor brought the cubs home because
 - a** his wife was experienced at caring for cubs.
 - b** there was no place to keep them at the zoo.
 - c** there was no one at the zoo to give them special care.
- 3 When the writer says the cubs were "helpless little balls of fur," he means
 - a** people played games with the little fur balls.
 - b** the doctor had covered the helpless cubs with fur.
 - c** the furry babies couldn't take care of themselves.
- 4 The visitor to the doctor's house didn't know
 - a** that there were lion cubs in the house.
 - b** that the lion cubs were kept in the garage.
 - c** Neither **a** nor **b**
- 5 The cubs' mother might have cared for them better if
 - a** she had had more experience as a mother.
 - b** she had been living in the wild.
 - c** Both **a** and **b**

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 tries to cure; takes care of (1)
- 2 people or animals under medical care (2)
- 3 extra; unusual; more than normal (4)
- 4 uneasy; restless; upset (5)
- 5 at the same time every day (6)
- 6 urging; persuading (7)
- 7 good-naturedly; in a kind manner (9)

C Homographs are two (or more) words that are spelled the same but have different meanings and origins. A word's meaning will depend on how it is used.

My dad is a football *fan*.

He keeps cool with an electric *fan*.

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 **upset** (6)
 - a** tipped over; overturned
 - b** disturbed; nervous; worried



LEARN ABOUT WORDS (continued)

9 lined (8)

- a covered the insides of
- b marked with lines

10 litter (9)

- a babies born at one time to an animal mother
- b mess; scattered bits; rubbish

THINK ABOUT IT

D Read each sentence. If the sentence is only about doctors who treat animals, write *animals*. If it is only about doctors who treat people, write *people*. If it is about both, write *both*.

- 1 They care for patients at night.
- 2 Their patients spend much of their time in cages.
- 3 They treat drivers injured in car accidents.
- 4 Some of their patients are newborns.
- 5 Their patients range in height from one inch to twelve feet.

E One word in this row doesn't belong with the others.

chickens ducks ~~foxes~~

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

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

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 6 lion | house cat | bear |
| 7 kitchen | bedroom | home |
| 8 morning | hours | afternoon |
| 9 door | window | bed |
| 10 teeth | cubs | claws |

F Some verbs do not add *-ed* to show that something happened in the past. These verbs are called irregular verbs because they do not follow a regular pattern when they tell about the past.

The cubs *drink* milk today.

They *drank* milk last night.

Read each sentence. Which verb in parentheses () makes sense in the sentence? Write the verb.

- 11 The lionesses (feed, fed) their cubs now.
- 12 Last night the cubs (sleep, slept) in the kitchen.
- 13 The cubs (bite, bit) the doctor twice last time.
- 14 Yesterday the cubs (tear, tore) a woman's stockings.
- 15 The doctor (knows, knew) that it was time for the cubs to leave.