

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Informational Writing Prompt

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### PROMPT

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To survive in the harsh arctic environment, animals need special adaptations. After reading *Where Do Polar Bears Live?*, describe in 1-2 paragraphs, using facts and definitions, how the polar bear is built to survive in the Arctic. Be sure to use evidence from the text to support your ideas.

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### TARGETED STANDARDS CONNECTION

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#### Science Standard 4

Life Science. Students will gain an understanding of Life Science through the study of changes in organisms over time, and the nature of living things.

*Objective 1:* Tell how external features affect an animal's ability to survive in its environment.

- b) Develop, communicate, and justify an explanation as to why a habitat is, or is not, suitable for a specific organism.

#### Writing

*W.2.2* Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

*W.2.8* Recall information from experiences, or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.

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### LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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#### Materials:

*Where Do Polar Bears Live?* (book by Sarah L. Thomson) (Lexile: 690 L)

Typed up text from book for students to refer to for evidence

#### Instructional Sequence:

1. Teacher hands out the typed up prompt and text.
2. The teacher introduces the writing prompt, and explains that students will be reading/listening to a text and using that text to answer the prompt.
3. The teacher reads aloud pages 8-28, and 35 of *Where Do Polar Bears Live?*, by Sarah L. Thomson, to the students. As the teacher reads, students may be underlining or highlighting information that they may find useful for responding to the prompt.
4. Upon finishing the read aloud, students will be provided with paper to respond to the prompt.

To survive in the harsh arctic environment, animals need special adaptations. After reading *Where Do Polar Bears Live?*, describe in 1-2 paragraphs, using facts and definitions, how the polar bear is built to survive in the Arctic. Be sure to use evidence from the text to support your ideas.

## Where Do Polar Bears Live?

This island is covered with snow. No trees grow. Nothing has green leaves. The land is white as far as you can see. Then something small and round and black pokes up out of the snow.

A black nose sniffs the air. Then a smooth white head appears. A mother polar bear heaves herself out of her den. A cub scrambles after her.

When the cub was born four months ago, he was no bigger than a guinea pig. Blind and helpless, he snuggled in his mother's fur. He drank her milk and grew, safe from the long Arctic winter. Outside the den, on some days, it was fifty degrees below zero. From October to February, the sun never rose.

Now it's spring—even though snow still covers the land. The cub is about the size of a cocker spaniel. He's ready to leave the den. For the first time, he sees bright sunlight and feels the wind ruffle his fur. The cub tumbles and slides down icy hills. His play makes him strong and teaches him to walk and run in snow.

Like his mother, the cub is built to survive in the Arctic. His white fur will grow to be six inches thick—longer than your hand. The skin beneath the cub's fur is black. It soaks up the heat of the sun. Under the skin is a layer of fat. Like a snug blanket, this blubber keeps in the heat of the bear's body. Polar bears get too hot more easily than they get too cold. They stretch out on the ice too cool off.

The cub has never seen his father. He never will. Polar bear fathers don't take care of cubs. For two years or a little longer, that will be the mother's job. After a few days near the den, the mother leads her cub onto the frozen sea. Fur between the pads of their paws keeps them from slipping on the ice. If the cub gets tired, the mother gives him a ride.

Polar bears live in the Arctic, around the North Pole. Some of the Arctic is land. There are cold, rocky islands and stretches of tundra where no trees grow. But a lot of the Arctic is ice.

Under the ice, there is cold, dark water. Seals live here. So do the fish and shrimp and crabs that they eat. Fish and shrimp and crabs spend their whole lives underwater. But seals have to come to the surface to breathe. They use the claws on their flippers to scrape away ice, making holes so they can reach the air.

The mother polar bear did not eat for months while she was in her den. She has lost hundreds of pounds. Now she needs to hunt. She smells a seal's breathing hole through three feet of snow and settles down to wait. She doesn't twitch a foot or take a step. If the seal hears the smallest sound, it will dart away to another hole.

At last the bear smells the seal. She hooks it with her sharp claws and crushes its skull with her jaws. She drags it up onto the ice. The mother strips away the skin and blubber. A little Arctic fox darts in to snatch a mouthful of meat.

On land, a polar bear might catch a tiny lemming. It might even nibble grass or seaweed. But to survive, polar bears need to catch seals. To catch seals, they must hunt on the ice.

This polar bear is a fierce, smart hunter. But he cannot survive with no place to hunt. Without ice, polar bears will become extinct—gone forever. If the ice doesn't stop shrinking, he may be the last polar bear.