

Name: _____

Arboreal Ape

By Guy Belleranti

On a visit to the zoo you hear a whooping, singing call. You look around. “What kind of bird is that?” you ask a zookeeper.

“It isn’t a bird,” you’re told. “It’s a gibbon.”

Gibbons are arboreal. This means they spend most of their time in the trees.

People seeing a gibbon in a zoo often think they’re looking at a monkey, but gibbons are not monkeys. They’re apes. Apes don’t have tails. Monkeys do. Apes also have more developed brains than monkeys.

Gibbons are smaller than gorillas, chimpanzees, and other great apes, but they are close relatives. Because they are smaller, they’re labeled “lesser” apes.



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Gibbons live in small family groups. Each group consists of one adult male, one adult female, and their young. Mated adults usually remain together for life. After a number of years, the young leave to form their own pairs and begin their own family groups.

There are many species of gibbons. All live in Asia. The largest, the siamang, can reach 30 pounds (13 kilograms). Some smaller species weigh only 9 pounds (4 kilograms).

Each gibbon species has its own unique call. The call gathers family members together and warns other gibbons to stay out of their territory.

Gibbons are very agile and sometimes climb as high as 80 to 100 feet (24 to 30 meters) above the ground. That's the height of an 8 or 10 story building!

Gibbons' arms are longer than their legs. They swing gracefully in the trees. If necessary, they can move quickly, arm over arm, from branch to branch. This motion is called brachiation.

Gibbons especially love fruit. They also occasionally eat leaves,



insects, spiders, small birds, and eggs.

With their long arms and acrobatic agility, gibbons can pluck fruit from branch ends most other animals cannot reach. Their agility also helps them escape predators such as leopards, large snakes, and birds of prey.

Unfortunately, the gibbons' agility has not protected them from humans. Their wild habitat continues to be destroyed by the cutting and burning of rainforest for agriculture. The illegal capture and selling of young gibbons as pets also endanger all gibbon species. But we can help. Choose agricultural products grown in sustainable ways and speak out against illegal wildlife trading.

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1. According to the article, where do gibbons live?

2. Explain how different families of gibbons communicate with each other.

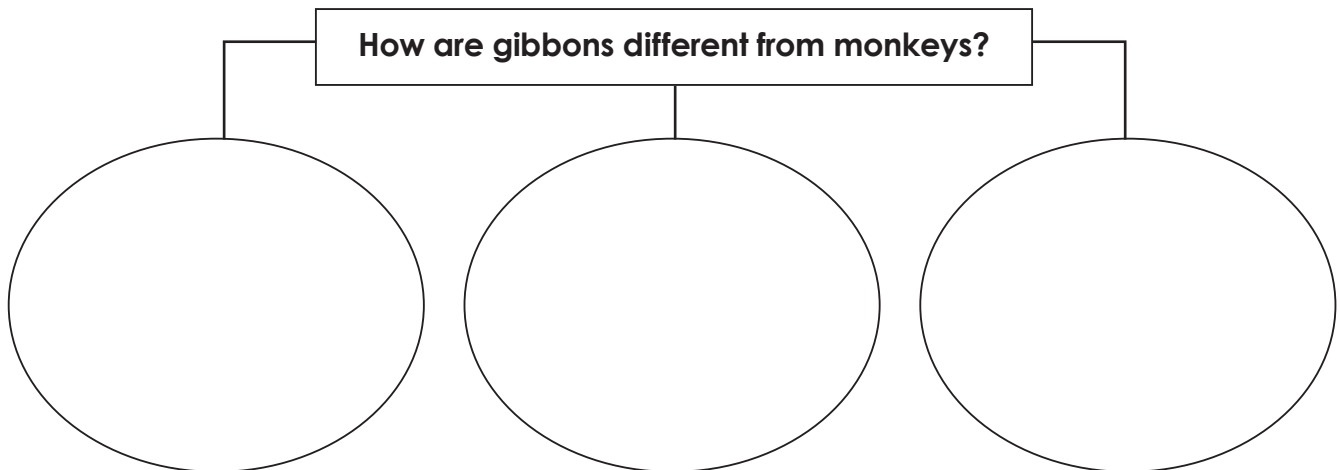
3. Reread the following sentences from the article.

With their long arms and acrobatic agility, gibbons can pluck fruit from branch ends most other animals cannot reach. Their agility also helps them escape predators such as leopards, large snakes, and birds of prey.

What is the best definition for the underlined word? Use clues from the sentences to help you.

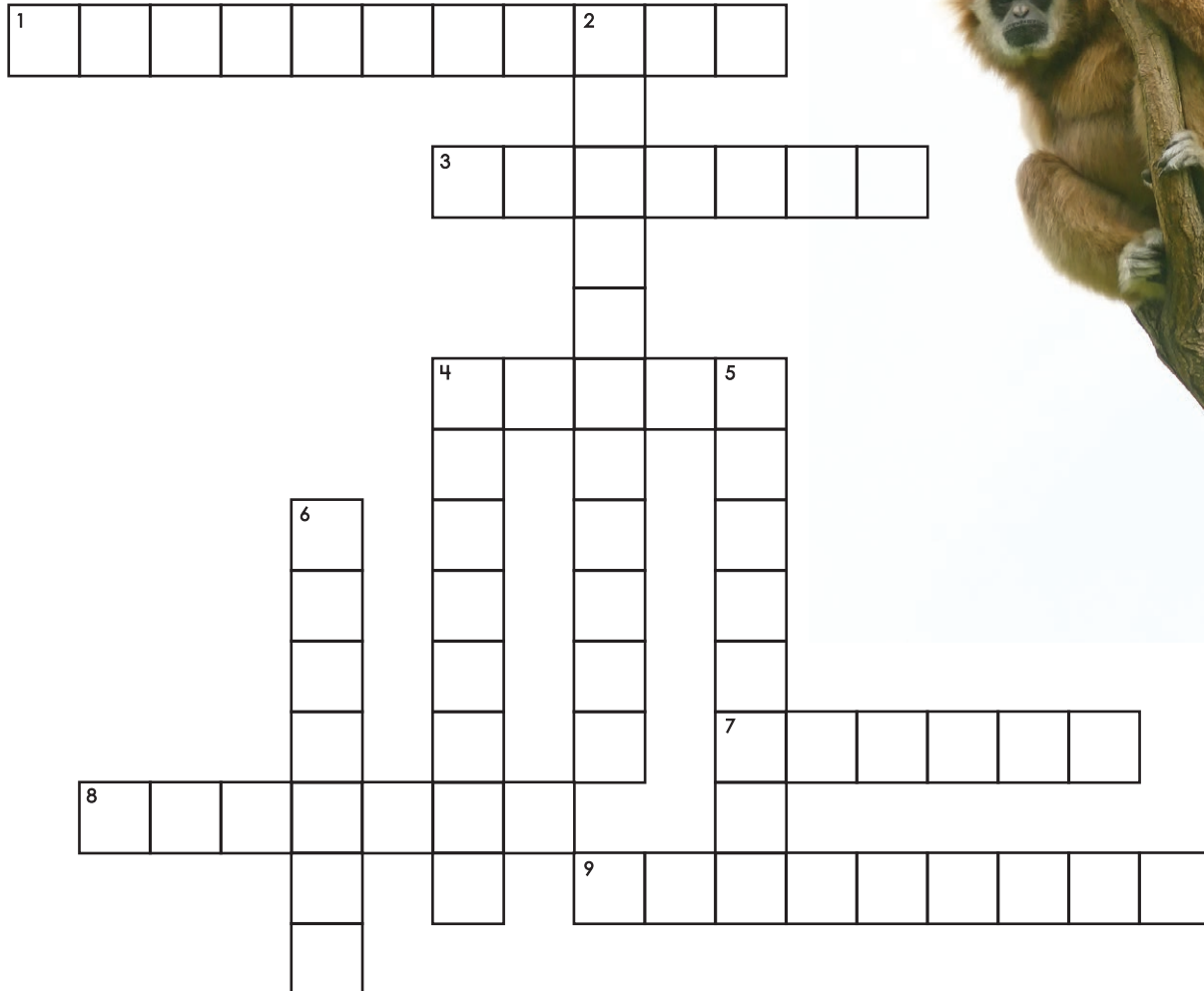
- a. difficult to move
- b. able to move quickly and easily
- c. being uncoordinated
- d. moving slowly

4. Complete the web with information from the article.



Name: _____

Arboreal Ape



Down:

- 2. swinging by moving arm over arm
- 4. animals that spend most of their time in trees
- 5. to cause something to be threatened
- 6. a group of related animals or plants that have shared qualities

Across:

- 1. able to be used without being completely used up or destroyed
- 3. the largest species of gibbon
- 4. able to move quickly and easily
- 7. a small ape that has long arms and legs and lives mostly in trees
- 8. the place or environment where a plant or animal lives and grows
- 9. an area that an animal or group of animals uses and defends

ANSWER KEY

Arboreal Ape

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1. According to the article, where do gibbons live?

Gibbons live in Asia.

2. Explain how different families of gibbons communicate with each other.

Each species of gibbon has its own unique call to help gather their family members together and to tell other gibbons to stay out of their territory.

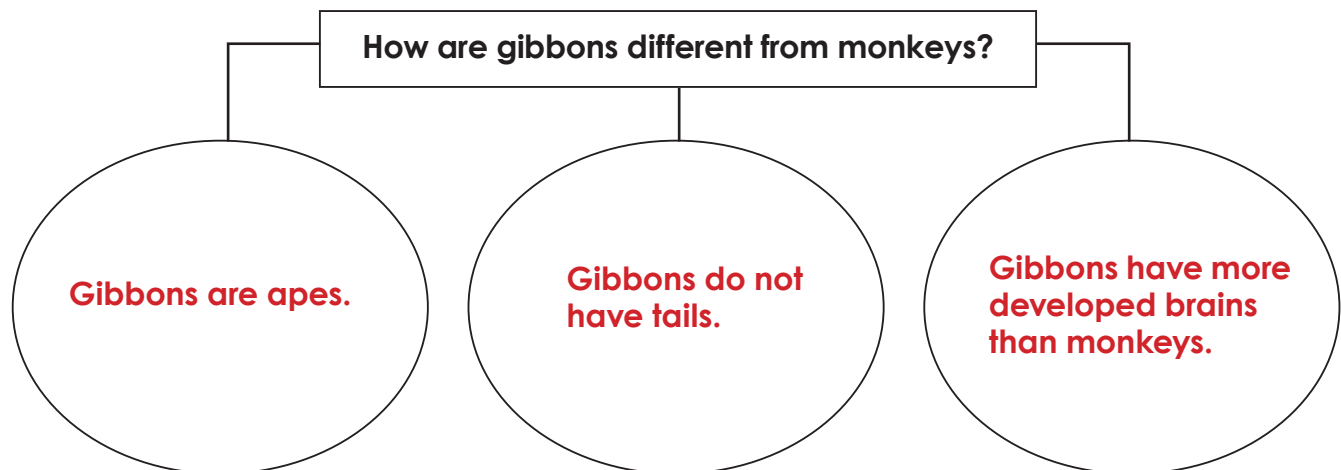
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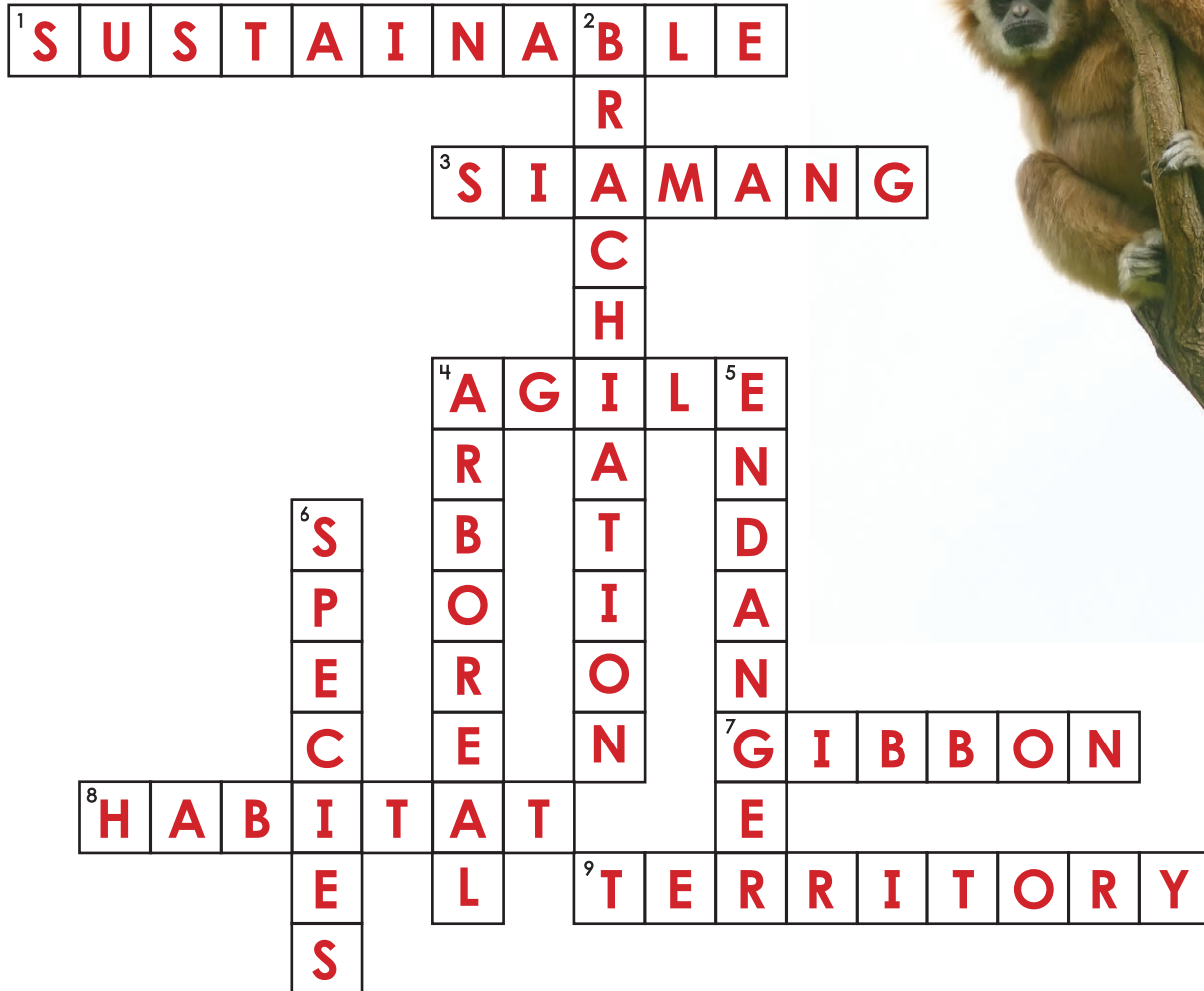
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