





Talk About It

These wild horses live in a big marsh in southern France. What do you see that tells you they are wild?



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WILD HORSES

The Wild Ponies of Chincoteague

by Gregory Searle

Vocabulary

descendants

sanctuary

glistening

threatened

coaxing

fragile

habitat



Context Clues

Paragraph Clues are words that can help readers figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words. Use paragraph clues to figure out what *descendants* means.

Every year since 1924, a pony swim has taken place between two tiny islands in the Atlantic Ocean. Assateague and Chincoteague Islands are located off the coasts of Maryland and Virginia. Part of Assateague belongs to Maryland and part belongs to Virginia. On a smaller neighboring island, the Chincoteague ponies graze.

These beautiful animals are **descendants** of wild horses. How the ancestors of the ponies ended up on an island, no one knows for sure.



The Pony Swim

The calm, quiet privacy of Assateague provided a **sanctuary** for its residents. However, when several terrible fires broke out on Chincoteague, it was clear that emergency services were needed. The new Volunteer Fire Department needed money to buy equipment. That’s how the idea for the annual pony swim started.

Every year thousands of people come to watch the ponies. Many watch from boats out on the **glistening** water. The firemen “round up” the wild ponies on Assateague Island. At first, the ponies feel **threatened** and try to head back into the trees. After some **coaxing**, the ponies swim across the channel to Chincoteague Island.

These ponies are small, but they are not **fragile**. They are very strong and intelligent animals. Many farmers want to buy a Chincoteague pony. Some of the foals are auctioned off to good homes. The rest of the ponies swim back to Assateague Island a few days later. The fire department uses the money that is raised to update their safety equipment.

Protecting the Ponies

The pony swim is important for another reason, too. The number of horses living on Assateague has to be controlled. If too many horses are born, there won’t be enough grass for the rest to eat. Keeping the numbers under control protects the **habitat** and its natural resources for future generations.

Reread for Comprehension



Monitor Comprehension

Cause and Effect As you read, remember to monitor your comprehension, or check your understanding, of cause and effect. A cause is why something happens. What happens is the effect. Authors do not always provide a cause and effect. Sometimes readers have to make inferences.

A Cause and Effect Diagram will help you identify what happens in a story or article and why. Reread the selection and identify the causes and effects.

Cause → Effect
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