How Water Loss Affects Biodiversity

by ReadWorks

In order for humans to live, they need access to fresh water. While nearly 70% of the earth's surface is water, most of it is salt water, which humans cannot drink. Only a small percentage, about 3%, is fresh water. Of this, about 69% is currently frozen as ice caps and glaciers, while another 30% is held underground in the soil or in rock. This means that only one percent of the world's fresh water—or 0.03% of the world's total water—is surface water that humans can access to drink. The small amount of potable (suitable for drinking) water makes its conservation incredibly important so that water shortages already occurring in some regions do not spread any further. If they do spread, this may lead to conflicts over the right to use this water.

There are many ways in which humans can affect access to fresh water. For example, humans can pollute bodies of water, thereby making them undrinkable. In some cases, they may make physical changes to the land by building over wetlands or damming up rivers. While wealthy countries can afford to make the investments necessary to make sure their residents have access to fresh water, poorer countries often cannot. This means that poorer countries are at greater risk of devastating droughts, which can lead both to dehydration and starvation, as the country is unable to water its crops.

Droughts can also have a negative impact on the biodiversity of a region. Biodiversity refers to an abundance of different types of plant and animal species within a particular region. The prefix "bio" means living, while "diversity" refers to different types of things. Around the world, more than 125,000 animal species live entirely in freshwater habitats, including 15,000 species of fish, 4,300 species of...
amphibians, and 5,000 species of mollusks, such as clams and oysters. Millions of other species, including humans, depend on fresh water to drink. When an area loses a large percentage of its fresh water, many animals die off. In some cases, species go entirely extinct. This leads to a decrease in the region’s biodiversity.

While droughts are natural and, in many places, a frequent occurrence, there are many things that humans do to increase the severity of these droughts. For one thing, the world’s population has doubled in the last 50 years, so humans have been using much more fresh water to drink and grow crops than they did in the past. Humanity’s increasing water consumption represents a growing threat to biodiversity.

In Africa, where droughts are common, they have been more prolonged than in the past. This is due in part to climate change, as well as a greater demand for water as the continent’s population has increased. During a drought in Kenya that lasted from 2007 to 2009, over 60 elephants died—some of dehydration, others of starvation due to lack of vegetation to eat, and others of diseases that became fatal due to the elephants’ weakened states. Some other endangered animals, such as the white rhinoceros, died too, which brought them closer to extinction.

When the biodiversity of a region declines, the human population suffers as well, in different ways. When a region experiences a significant drought, many animals may die from lack of water and food. If the region is one like Kenya, which depends on its wildlife to draw tourists, the effects of the drought can be devastating. If tourism declines due to high wildlife casualties, then the locals who depend on income from tourism will lose their livelihood. People may then turn to farming to earn money, but crops require water to grow. This can place further strain on the water supply and worsen the original problem of the drought. Sometimes, an imbalance in the system, such as a lack of water, can enter into a feedback loop where the situation only gets worse and worse.

Losses in biodiversity can also lead to problems with the availability of food. As we’ve discussed, a lack of water can prevent farmers from growing crops, which can lead to starvation. However, when a region loses its biodiversity, it disrupts the food chain in many ways. For example, if a species goes extinct, all the species used to feeding on it must find another source of food. Say a particular species of freshwater frog dies because its habitat has been depleted in a drought. This means the population of birds that feeds on this frog may decline as well, as it lacks sufficient food. Conversely, the insects that the frogs fed on may increase in number, as the frogs are no longer around to keep their population in check.

One of the main advantages of biodiversity is that there are certain natural processes that plants and animals perform that humans simply cannot. The billions of bees in the world play a critical role in pollinating the world’s flowers. If they did not do this, the food supply would dwindle and the human population would suffer greatly.

Biodiversity can play an important function in the cleaning of water. When water passes through lakes, wetlands, and streams, it often encounters different species of fungi, algae, and bacteria. Many of these microbes actually filter microscopic particles out of the water, making it safe for humans to drink. Even some larger species do similar work. For example, the caddisfly constructs nets underwater that filter out different kinds of particles, which it then eats. Wetlands rich with these filtering organisms act as natural water filtration systems. When the biodiversity of a region declines, many of the organisms critical to this filtering process can disappear. Therefore, pressures on the freshwater supply can cause biodiversity to decrease, which can cut the drinkable water supply even
While humans do have some water filtration plants, these plants are expensive and take a lot of energy to maintain. For centuries the water that flowed into New York City was naturally filtered by a northern watershed. As the water flowed south, it was purified. However, as the watershed was polluted and diverted, the water flowing to New York City was no longer filtered. The city faced a choice of spending $6 billion to $8 billion to build a water filtration plant, or just $1 billion to restore the natural watershed. The city wisely chose the latter option.
Water from the Air: Cloud Forests
by Alden Wicker

In the Americas, Asia, and Africa, there's a special kind of forest. It's rare, beautiful, and incredibly important to the animals and plants living there, and the humans who live nearby.

It's called the cloud forest. Cloud forests, like the name implies, can be found in the clouds on the slopes of mountains. Because they are often shrouded in warm mist, cloud forests are very humid and wet places. But that's what makes these forests so valuable.

Like rainforests, cloud forests experience rainfall, but they also capture water straight from the air. Water condenses on the leaves of the plants (sort of like dew on the grass in the morning) and drips through the canopy to the floor. If you stand in a cloud forest, you'll hear the constant drip of water, even if it's not raining. The water captured is pure and unpolluted, and flows through the ground into streams and then rivers.

Some people call cloud forests "water towers," because they are so important for providing water to nearby villages and cities. In the capital of Honduras, Tegucigalpa, four out of 10 people get their water from La Tigre National Park. That's about 340,000 people drinking cloud forest water! And there are a lot of other big cities that get some of their water from cloud forests, like Quito, Ecuador; Mexico City, Mexico; and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

In Guatemala, most of the water comes from the Sierra de las Minas Biosphere Reserve. More than 60 permanent streams flow from the reserve downhill to settlements, villages, and cities. People drink the water, use it for cooking, and irrigate their farm fields with it. In Kenya, people rely on the water from cloud forests to provide electricity by harnessing the energy of rivers that flow from Mount Kenya.

But it's not just humans who rely on cloud forests. While they only make up 2.5 percent of the world's forests, they are home to a stunning array of animals and plants. There are more species of hummingbirds in cloud forests than anywhere else in the world. Colorful birds, lizards, moss, and ferns live here; plus plants that grow on trees, called bromeliads. There's even a bear called the spectacled bear, named for the markings on its face. It's the only bear that lives in South America, and there are only a few thousand remaining because of habitat destruction and hunting.

We don't even know all of the plants, animals, and insects that live in cloud forests, yet we keep discovering new ones. In the 1990s, scientists discovered two bird species that only live in cloud forests. One is the Jocotoco Antpitta, or Grallaria ridgelyi, which lives in Ecuador in a small patch of cloud forest. Another is the Scarlet-banded Barbet, or Capito wallacei, which was discovered in Peru living on just one mountain. Scientists also discovered a new type of cow and barking deer in the cloud forests of Laos and Vietnam.

As you can see, cloud forests are extremely special places. But they are also very fragile and face a wide array of threats. Local poor people clear the forest so that they can grow subsistence crops. They also hunt endangered and threatened animals for meat, and cut down trees to heat their homes and cook. Commercial farmers convert the land so that they can grow fruits, vegetables, and coffee beans. Cloud forests are cleared and turned into pasture for cattle. Building roads and gem mines also severely damages the cloud forests.
Once cloud forests are cleared, the damage can be irreversible. The cloud cover, which is so essential to the growth of these forests, disperses. The soil degrades and erodes, washing down the mountain slopes. Many species vital to the ecosystem die off. What is left behind is a barren, dusty slope unsuitable for farming and unable to support animals, plants, or even people.

You can think of cloud forests sort of like little habitat islands, bounded by other types of forests and habitats on all sides. Many species are unable to leave one patch to travel to another. Once one patch is completely cleared, many species of plants and animals can go extinct, without ever being seen or studied by people like us. Some of the plant species lost could have been a new medicine or edible crop.

Scientists estimate that each year, 1.1 percent of the world's total cloud forest land is cleared for logging and timber falling. But even more worrying is the threat of climate change. Cloud forests form at very specific altitudes and rely on certain temperatures to thrive. If world temperatures rise, cloud forests would have to move up to a higher altitude where the temperatures are cooler in order to adjust. Some cloud forests are on mountain peaks with nowhere to climb and would die out. Climate change could also lessen cloud cover, which cloud forests rely on to grow. Because of this, the rate of loss could double.

As you can see, cloud forests are essential, providing water, food, and medicine to the people living in, around, and near them. So why would local people destroy them? To understand why, you have to put yourself in the shoes of a poor local farmer.

Imagine that you have no electricity or gas to heat your home or cook your meals. You do not have an oven or stove, so you get wood from the forest to build a fire. You also need food, and you cannot find a job that pays enough to buy any. There might not be a grocery store anywhere nearby, either. Therefore, you clear some forest next to your home so that you can plant fruits, vegetables, and grains. You also hunt local animals to eat. You would probably be excited to have a road built through the forest to your village, so you can easily go to a nearby city, or reach a hospital if you or someone in your family has an emergency.

If only a few people did these things, it might not be a problem. But the population is growing fast, and when thousands of people clear the forest and hunt animals, it becomes a crisis. Scientists fear we might lose cloud forests altogether, along with the water and other services they provide.

To combat the problem, some governments have designated certain stretches of cloud forest as protected, and it's illegal to clear or log them. This can help preserve cloud forests against mining companies and large commercial farmers. But it can be hard to enforce these rules against local populations. To work with local populations of people is more effective, providing them with other ways to get food and energy so that they can leave the cloud forests intact.

It is also effective to educate the local population on how cloud forests provide fresh water and what happens when they are cleared. For example, in the indigenous community of Loma Alta in Ecuador, once the people understood that the cloud forest is necessary to provide water for farms at lower altitudes, they worked together successfully to protect it.

Cloud forests are too valuable of a natural resource to lose. With laws to protect them, education, and economic support for local people, we might be able to save them—plus the animals and plants they support—before it's too late.
Use the article "How Water Loss Affects Biodiversity" to answer questions 1 to 2.

1. Read this paragraph from "How Water Loss Affects Biodiversity."

"When a region experiences a significant drought, many animals may die from lack of water and food. [...] If tourism declines due to high wildlife casualties, then the locals who depend on income from tourism will lose their livelihood. People may then turn to farming to earn money, but crops require water to grow. This can place further strain on the water supply and worsen the original problem of the drought."

What event can cause many animals to die from lack of water and food?

2. In this paragraph, how does the word "when" help show a cause-and-effect relationship?

WRITE ANSWER HERE
Use the article "Water from the Air: Cloud Forests" to answer questions 3 to 4.

3. Read these sentences from "Water from the Air: Cloud Forests."

"Once cloud forests are cleared, the damage can be irreversible. The cloud cover, which is so essential to their livelihood, disperses. The soil degrades and erodes, washing down the mountain slopes. Many species vital to the ecosystem die off."

Based on this paragraph, what can cause cloud cover to disperse, soil to degrade and erode, and many species to die off?

4. In this paragraph, does the word "once" help show a cause-and-effect relationship? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
Use the articles "Water from the Air: Cloud Forests" and "How Water Loss Affects Biodiversity" to answer questions 5 to 6.

5. Compare the language used by the author to show a cause-and-effect relationship in the quotation from "How Water Loss Affects Biodiversity" with the language used to show a cause-and-effect relationship in the quotation from "Water from the Air: Cloud Forests."

6. Could the word "once" in the quotation from "Water from the Air: Cloud Forests" be replaced by the word "when" without changing the meaning of the quotation? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
1. What is biodiversity?
   A. a lack of different types of plant and animal species within a particular region
   B. an abundance of different types of plant and animal species within a particular region
   C. the different types of plants and animals that live in freshwater habitats
   D. a method of conserving the planet's small amount of potable water

2. The cause of humanity's increased water consumption is an increased population. What is the effect?
   A. less potable water, a growing threat to biodiversity
   B. more potable water, a growing threat to biodiversity
   C. less potable water, a decreased threat to biodiversity
   D. more potable water, a decreased threat to biodiversity

3. Poorer countries are at greater risk during droughts than richer countries. What evidence from the passage supports this conclusion?
   A. With no water for crops, droughts can lead to starvation and dehydration.
   B. Droughts in Africa have been more prolonged than in the past due to climate change.
   C. During droughts, many animals die, and sometimes whole species go extinct.
   D. Poor countries often cannot afford investments that ensure access to fresh water.

4. Read the following sentences: "When the biodiversity of a region declines, many of the organisms critical to this filtering process can disappear. Therefore, pressures on the freshwater supply can cause biodiversity to decrease, which can cut the drinkable water supply even further."

   Based on this information, what can be concluded?
   A. Water supply and biodiversity are unrelated.
   B. Biodiversity affects the fresh water supply, but not vice versa.
   C. Water supply and biodiversity are interconnected.
   D. The fresh water supply affects biodiversity, but not vice versa.
5. What is this passage mostly about?
   A. the effects of water loss on biodiversity
   B. the drought in Kenya from 2007 to 2009
   C. the distribution of the world's fresh water
   D. the effects of population growth on the water supply

6. Read the following sentences: "Say a particular species of freshwater frog dies because its habitat has been depleted in a drought. This means the population of birds that feeds on this frog may decline as well, as it lacks sufficient food. **Conversely,** the insects that the frogs fed on may increase in number, as the frogs are no longer around to keep their population in check."

What does the word "**conversely**" mean?
   A. in the same vein
   B. for this reason
   C. as an example
   D. on the other hand

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Humans can affect access to fresh water in many ways, _______ polluting bodies of water and building dams.
   A. finally
   B. such as
   C. initially
   D. although

8. What makes the conservation of fresh drinking water so important?

10. How might humans help prevent losses in biodiversity? Use information from the passage to support your answer.
1. What are cloud forests?
   A. forests that are made out of clouds and float through the earth's atmosphere
   B. forests of oak and maple trees found in the northeastern United States
   C. pine forests that live in cold climates without much animal life
   D. humid forests that live among clouds on mountain slopes

2. What does this article try to persuade the reader of?
   A. Governments should not interfere with businesses.
   B. It is too late to save cloud forests.
   C. Protecting cloud forests is important.
   D. Commercial farming is more important than cloud forests.

3. The loss of cloud forests is harmful to the surrounding ecosystem.
   What evidence from the passage supports this statement?
   A. When cloud forests are cleared away, the soil degrades and erodes. What is left behind is a dusty slope that is unable to support animals, plants, and people.
   B. Cloud forests live among the clouds on the slopes of mountains. They are often surrounded by warm mist, which makes them very humid and wet places.
   D. Commercial farmers sometimes clear cloud forests so that the land can be used as pasture for cattle. Other times, cloud forests are cleared to build roads.

4. Why might providing economic support to people living near cloud forests help save the forests?
   A. People living near cloud forests would be less likely to care about protecting animals like the Jocotoco Antpitta and the Scarlet-banded Barbet.
   B. People living near cloud forests would be less likely to clear away parts of the forest to try to support themselves.
   C. People living near cloud forests would be more likely to buy cars and build roads through the forest to drive on.
   D. People living near cloud forests would be more likely to buy gems dug from the ground by mining companies.
5. What is this passage mainly about?

A. how people in Tegucigalpa, Quito, Mexico City, and Dar es Salaam get their water
B. the history of the Sierra de las Minas Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala
C. the mining companies and commercial farms that threaten cloud forests around the world
D. cloud forests, the threats they face, and what can be done to save them

6. Read the following sentences: "It is also effective to educate the local population on how cloud forests provide fresh water and what happens when they are cleared. For example, in the indigenous community of Loma Alta in Ecuador, once the people understood that the cloud forest is necessary to provide water for farms at lower altitudes, they worked together successfully to protect it."

What does the word "local" mean?

A. shrinking slowly over a long period of time
B. turning out differently from what was expected
C. having to do with a particular place or area
D. causing people to feel extremely happy

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Cloud forests are home to unusual animals, _______ spectacled bears and barking deer.

A. previously
B. such as
C. as a result
D. third
8. Name an animal that is found only in cloud forests.

9. How are cloud forests valuable to human beings? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.

10. Are cloud forests too valuable of a natural resource to lose, as the author claims? Explain why or why not, using evidence from the passage.
Zoe yawned as she entered the employee entrance of the Bronx Zoo. It was 6 a.m. and much too early for the recent college graduate to be wide awake. As she waited for her morning coffee to kick in, she watched the sun rise over the canopy of blooming trees that decorated the park grounds. It was her second week on the job as an animal keeper. After four years at university studying zoology, she finally landed a spot at one of the most famous zoos in the world. She thought of all the visitors that came from all over the world to wander around the grounds to see thousands of exotic and foreign animals.

"Zoe!" her supervisor, Carlos, called out. "Let's get going!"

She jolted up and out of her trance. "Coming!" she shouted back. She stuffed her things into her locker and pulled out her uniform—a simple pair of khaki pants and a white polo shirt. She yanked on her rubber boots and set off after Carlos. It was time for their morning rounds, during which they fed the animals and cleaned their habitats before the visitors arrived.

Zoe had specialized in behavioral ecology during her studies at university, so when she applied for a job at the zoo, she specified that she was very interested in the ways animals adapt their behavior to changing environmental factors. Zoe remembered hanging posters of endangered animals in her room as a child and hoped one day she would somehow be able to save them. Therefore, when she came to work at the zoo, she wanted to work in the exhibits of endangered species.

"Alright, you set out the food, and I'll start cleaning," Carlos said to Zoe. They had arrived at the snow leopard habitat after a short cruise in one of the zoo’s several golf carts—a way in which the animal keepers traversed the 265 acres of the zoo. Zoe was still new to the job, so she was still thrilled by the rare opportunities it presented. She treasured the mornings she spent with Liya, the snow leopard, especially because Liya had just given birth to a cub named Leo.
Zoe could spend hours watching the mother and her cub. With light-gray fur speckled with large, black splotches, Leo was extremely playful—he spent hours running around the rocky habitat, prancing, falling, and teetering across narrow tree trunks with his big paws stumbling underneath him. Since snow leopards are usually most active in the early mornings and late afternoons, Zoe always got a show when she was assigned to their habitat at the beginning of the day.

As she laid out small rodents for the leopards to eat, Zoe tried to picture Liya and Leo in their natural habitat, far out in the mountains of Pakistan. Although it pained her somewhat to see the two majestic animals in such a limited space, she reminded herself that it was for the better. Snow leopards were at serious risk in their homelands as a result of poaching, a loss of habitat, and decreasing amounts of prey. Liya was originally rescued from the mountains when she was found alone after her family had been killed.

There are only somewhere between 3,500 and 7,000 snow leopards left in the wild. Since they are still being hunted for their pelts and bones, conservationists have set up cameras to watch the endangered animals in their natural habitats, which are found in Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China, and Pakistan. The snow leopard habitat at the Bronx Zoo is part of the Species Survival Plan Program, which helps to manage the species population around the world.

"You know, one day we'll have to say goodbye to these two," Carlos said, pointing at the mother and her cub, who was busy leaping from rock to rock, his fluffy tail trailing behind him.

"What do you mean?" Zoe asked.

"Well, once the government of Pakistan is able to ensure a safe habitat for the leopards, we'll have to send them back to their home," he explained.

Zoe knew the pair would be happier back in the snow-covered peaks of the Himalayas, but she would miss starting her days with them. Yet she also knew it would be a while until the government could guarantee a safe place for the leopards.

During her time at university, she had spent some time researching the snow leopards. Farmers in the high-altitude grasslands of the snow leopards' habitat had begun increasing their number of livestock. Because the livestock competed with the leopards' natural prey for resources, the population of the prey had decreased. As a result, the snow leopards had started to feed on the livestock, creating more interactions between leopards and humans. To protect themselves and their livelihood, humans often made this interaction fatal for the snow leopards. Zoe knew the government had to solve that problem before the snow leopards could be reintroduced to their natural habitat.

"Alright then, let's get moving," Carlos said. Zoe looked over to where she had dropped the rodents for the leopards' breakfast, and sure enough, they were gone. Liya lounged on a rock on her back while Leo tried to get her attention by walking on her stomach. He pawed at her and licked her face until she lazily got to her feet and chased after the prancing cub. Zoe laughed at the two and climbed into the golf cart next to Carlos. "On to the next one!" she exclaimed. As the sun climbed higher in the sky, the two animal keepers moved on to the next exhibit. It was just another set of rounds that would help ensure the safety of endangered species from all over the world.
1. Where does Zoe work?
   A. the Bronx Zoo
   B. the Brooklyn Zoo
   C. the Queens Zoo
   D. the Manhattan Zoo

2. What does the author describe in the passage?
   A. how Pakistan's government is working to ensure a safe habitat for snow leopards
   B. the different exotic and endangered animals at the Bronx Zoo
   C. how Zoe got her job as an animal keeper at the Bronx Zoo
   D. Zoe's interest in endangered animals

3. Zoe has been interested in endangered species since she was a little girl. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?
   A. "Therefore, when she came to work at the zoo, she wanted to work in the exhibits of endangered species."
   B. "Zoe remembered hanging posters of endangered animals in her room as a child and hoped one day she would somehow be able to save them."
   C. "After four years at university studying zoology, she finally landed a spot at one of the most famous zoos in the world."
   D. "When she applied for a job at the zoo, she specified that she was very interested in the ways animals adapt their behavior to changing environmental factors."

4. Why does Zoe treasure the mornings she spends with Liya and Leo?
   A. because she gets to sleep in later
   B. because she enjoys watching them interact
   C. because she enjoys feeding them rodents
   D. because she enjoys cleaning their habitat
5. What is this passage mostly about?
   A. an animal keeper who wants to protect endangered species
   B. two snow leopards at the Bronx Zoo, Liya and her cub Leo
   C. how Zoe got a job as an animal keeper at the Bronx Zoo
   D. the problems faced by animals that live in captivity

6. Read the following sentences: "With light-gray fur speckled with large, black splotches, Leo was extremely playful-he spent hours running around the rocky habitat, prancing, falling, and **teetering** across narrow tree trunks with his big paws stumbling underneath him."

   As used in this sentence, what does "**teetering**" most nearly mean?
   A. listening closely
   B. moving gracefully
   C. walking unsteadily
   D. crying loudly

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

   ________ Zoe will miss the snow leopards when they are returned to the Himalayas, she knows that it is for the best.
   A. On the other hand
   B. Therefore
   C. Finally
   D. While

8. What will happen to the snow leopards at the Bronx Zoo once the Pakistan government can ensure a safe habitat for snow leopards?
9. What three things have threatened snow leopards in their natural habitats?


10. Explain how the actions of humans can both help and harm endangered species such as snow leopards. Support your answer using information from the passage.
It was about four months after I graduated from college that I finally got a job working at the zoo. The pay wasn't bad: all the chicken nuggets I could stomach and my own room in the cage where they kept the human beings.

I've always been a little nervous starting anything new, but I remember that first day being particularly unnerving, waiting for the zoo to open. I asked Joseph, who had been there for years, if there was anything I could help set up. He told me just to relax, maybe go down the slide a few times.

"Nothing like the slide to clear your mind," he said.

Emily and Cindy were waiting in line to go down the slide.

"You look a little green," Emily said.

"First day," I replied.

"First day, huh?" said Cindy. "I remember my first day. I spent the whole day hiding in the laundry closet."

"Listen," said Emily. "There's nothing to be nervous about. We just do our thing, and the people come and watch and sometimes ask us to do a trick."

When I got to the top of the ladder, a blow horn resounded through the park announcing that the gates were opening. My heart did a somersault, and I slid down the slide.

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Sure, the job had little to do with what I had studied in college, but after having spent four months looking for work, I was desperate. It wasn't so bad at the zoo, either. I liked our habitat. It reminded me a lot of home. The part of our habitat that faced the visitors was kind of like a backyard. Behind the backyard was the fake house where we each had our own little room; we could always go nap there when we got tired. There was a pond-sized bathtub we were encouraged to swim in, and there was always music playing in case we felt like dancing.

Rainy days were best because there weren't many visitors. The zookeepers had hired a wonderful bunch of human beings, and it was a pleasure getting to know them all. It turned out every single one of them had something special they could do-Joseph composed music, Emily wrote poetry, Cindy read Tarot cards—but even more impressive than what they could do, was who they all were. Sometimes I wondered...
if the zookeepers—or even the wide-eyed and fascinated visitors—had any idea just how special we all were.

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On sunny days, the visitors crammed around our cage and hollered and cooed at us. Our trainers entered every hour and had us perform tricks in exchange for chunks of cookie dough, which, of course, none of us could refuse. My tricks usually had to do with dancing. One of our trainers spotted me dancing one evening and realized quickly that I had formidable moves. Of course the visitors ate it up. Many nights I’d go to sleep with my toes painfully calloused from fancy footwork and my limbs aching from my shaking legs. Joseph did mostly magic tricks, and Emily rode her bicycle in circles.

Once I recited a poem I’d memorized in French, but by the time I’d reached the third stanza, no one was listening.

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On the third Sunday of every month, our trainers would leash us up and take us for a leisurely walk about the park. Without the glass between us and them, the visitors were much more respectful. They even seemed a little frightened.

One time a little girl dropped her doll, and Cindy picked it up and handed it to her. Her father suddenly pulled her away from Cindy.

"Don't touch it, Amanda!" he shouted. "That's a wild animal!"

Cindy was so angry the trainer had to wrestle the girl's doll away from her.

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But working in the zoo had its perks, too. And eventually I’d been there so long that many of visitors started to remember me.

"It's Jesse!" the children would shout. "Do the dance! Dance for us!" And they’d dance with me on the other side of the glass.

There was even an old woman who came now and then and asked me to recite French poetry to her.

One time I slipped out of the cage late at night and sneaked into the "Oceans of the World" exhibit. The lights were out, but glowing jellyfish illuminated the walkways. I followed those drifting pillows of light through tunnels of artificial coral, past walls of water flashing with silver schools of tuna, and the circular tank with the circling sharks. Finally, I found what I was looking for: an immense cylindrical tank in the very center of the exhibit. In the dark, I could just barely read the plaque: ARCHITEUTHIS, Giant Squid. It was murky in the tank, and I stared at that black abyss for a long time, seeing only my own reflection trying to peer in through the glass. And I started thinking about who I was and about the other human beings, and I thought about what we were all doing in that zoo. And then, all at once, I realized that I had been looking into the eye of the squid. And in a flash of twisting tentacles and a cloud of ink even darker than the water, it disappeared into the shadows.

"And who are you really?" I whispered, staring into the tank.
Use the article "A Day at the Zoo" to answer questions 1 to 2.

1. What is Zoe's job at the zoo?

2. The text states that although it pained Zoe to see the snow leopards in such a limited space at the zoo, "she reminded herself it was for the better." Why was keeping the snow leopards at the zoo "for the better"? Use details from the text to support your answer.

Use the article "Homo Sapiens" to answer questions 3 to 4.

3. What is Jesse's job at the zoo? Use details from the text to support your answer.
4. Does Jesse feel completely happy with his life in the zoo? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

5. Contrast the jobs of Zoe and Jesse in these two stories. Use details from both texts to support your answer.

6. Contrast the zoos from these two stories. Use details from both texts to support your answer.