

grade 2:

5-248-Daniel from Selina's class

first round short story

The Escape

“That was just a normal and sunny day in France. While I was strolling down the corn field, I heard the tractor coming closer! I’m a natural fighter and I am not afraid of anything. In my country, I am known for fighting against my predators such as snakes and eagles. Sometimes, I even have to fight cars, tractors and even farmers!! All of a sudden, I rolled my body up and quickly got on top of the haystack, and then— “Louis the black bellied hamster exclaimed in an excited voice.

Before Louis could even finish his sentence, Bentley the Dog continued in a plain voice sounding like an emotionless robot, “Then I took out my sword and commanded the tractor to stop. HALT! — This is the third time you told me this story this morning, try something new next time. Ok, let’s go get some snacks.” Bentley ran away as fast as Sonic the Hedgehog, because he was tired of hearing Louis’s story. Bentley was the dog with golden fur that glows in the dark who was adopted by this family.

“Hey, where’s my beautiful princess, look what I got for you!” Emma, the youngest child in the family, walked in with a beautiful doll house. She really likes the hamster given by the family’s friend and even named her Lucy the Princess.

How could she possibly know that Lucy the princess was actually Louis the Knight? Louis, the black bellied hamster, was born and raised in a corn field in France. He has special black fur that grows around his belly, which makes him look like a knight wearing a shiny, black armor. Once, he was living an exciting life until he was captured by a farmer boy picking up onions. Later, he was given as a present. A few days later, he woke up in an extra soft pink bed. Emma was sitting beside him, singing nursery rhymes. Now, Louis was a princess. He thought to himself, "This is the end of my life. I have to go back to France." The hamster knew he wouldn't be able to make there without an assistant, so he coaxed Bentley to go with him. However, Bentley told him he cannot leave his family because they all love them with hearts but he decided to help Louis anyway.

One Sunday afternoon, the whole family was working in a garden. Even Bentley had fun while chomping on both tomatoes and lettuces, that created more work for them, but neither of them wanted to scold the dog. Now it was the perfect time to escape! Bentley secretly sneaked into the house, unlocked the dollhouse, and let the hamster out. Louis took a deep breath and made a perfect jump and landed on Bentley's back. At this moment, he totally believed that the story Louis had been telling him. They successfully made it out of the house and escaped.

second round essay

Evidence On Fish Can Do Math

Have you ever seen a dog or other pet can do tricks? If I tell you fish can do math, you might be astonished to know that a harmless pet can do basic

math, or you will probably be confused. The scientist has provided enough evidences to prove that fish can be a quick learner and be doing kindergarten level math. There are numerous evidences to prove that animals are smart but I want to focus on the fish's ability to do math.

First, the research shows that fish are good at memorizing things and can tell the difference between different shapes. The team at German University of Bonn had conducted the study on colorful zebra fish and stingrays. The study indicates that they cannot only memorize the numbers and colors of the shape, but also tell the difference of the

shapes. This amazing and memorizing ability astonished everyone.

Second, the fish also demonstrates a marvelous ability to do addition. They can regroup the color shapes and pick the right color. Furthermore, they can even do subtraction even if it's been challenging to themselves.

The third reason is that the fish could apply their math skills to try new tasks. Additionally, the scientists tried to challenge the fish with advanced level math, the fish didn't fail the test. The fish had to process a complicated thinking process. Not only

they have to memorize the shapes, they had to accurately identify the exchanged object. However, some people believe that fish don't acquire those skills because they're just looking at the similar images instead of doing actual math.

In conclusion, the fish has already been tested by different group of scientists and the intelligence of

fish has already show that they can do basic math and master essential logic skills.

2-23-Kongkong from Helen's class

first round short story

Lucy's Magic Adventure

On a sunny day, Lucy and her dad were walking on the street to the park. The street was very crowded. Plenty of people were spilling on the sidewalk like water. The unpleasant smell came from the vehicles. The truck's engine made a big noise that seemed to go on and on. Lucy felt gloomy and they started coughing. This was not a good start for the day. What would happen next?

Finally, they were at the park. The park was full of lush trees, for example oak, chestnut and maple. The ground was covered by furry grass like a green blanket. Many mommy birds were

feeding their babies worms. Lucy stopped coughing and started singing.

Suddenly, Lucy heard someone singing along. Hard to believe but it was a squirrel!

"Welcome to my home!" said the squirrel, "I am Squirrely, nice to meet you."

"I am Lucy. Nice to meet you, too." Lucy answered, "It's really refreshing here. Do you know why I feel relaxed here?"

"On the street, there are many cars and people that produce carbon dioxide. Trees breathe in carbon dioxide and breathe out oxygen that people need. There are more trees in the park than

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on the street. So, we have more fresh oxygen and feel better here," Squirrely replied.

"Oh, I see," Lucy said. "But we have noses and trees don't. How do they breathe?"

"Good question! Let me show you," Squirrely answered,

"Now, close your eyes for a second."

So, Lucy did. "Abra-ca-dabra! Now open your eyes," Squirrely shouted.

When Lucy opened her eyes, they shrank as small as a grain of pollen and stood on a leaf. Now, leaves are gigantic for them.

"Look at these holes on this leaf. These holes are called

stomata that breathe like our noses,” Squirrely said.

“Wow! The stomata look like a mouth opening and closing. It is fun and interesting!” Lucy exclaimed.

“Yes, you are right. Please close your eyes again,” Squirrely said. In one second, they turned back to normal again.

“Why don’t we do an experiment to prove it?” Squirrely said.

“That sounds super fun!” Lucy shouted excitedly.

They found a sunny spot and threw a leaf in a pond.

After about twenty minutes, Lucy asked as she pointed to the leaf, “What are those tiny bubbles on the leaf? Where are they from?”

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“Those tiny bubbles are the oxygen breathed out by the stomata,” Squirrely told Lucy.

“That’s so cool! Leaves are our friends. They give us the oxygen we need,” Lucy said. “But in winter, most leaves fall on the ground and die. Who gives us oxygen in winter?”

Squirrely said, “Well, great question! There is a very small creature called algae in the ocean and lake. It produces over half of the oxygen for us all year long.”

“That’s unbelievable! Half of the oxygen is from the ocean and the rest is from trees!” Lucy exclaimed. “So, we need to plant more trees and protect the ocean and lake. It is to ensure we have enough fresh oxygen!”

“That’s right! Give me five!” Squirrely shouted.

Clap! “I will collect all kinds of seeds here. everyone in the city will get one, and grow a lush tree everywhere. Very soon, our city will be full of fresh oxygen. See you next time!” said Lucy, It turned out to be a meaningful and interesting day!

second round essay

Fish is Smarter Than You Think

Most young children in kindergarten can do basic math, for example, $1+2=3$. Could fish do it, too? A team did a new study that asserts fish can be trained to do basic math.

In the study, the fish were shown two images, each with four squares, circles, or triangles. They were either all blue or all yellow.

The fish were then shown two new images — one with five and one with three squares.

If the images contained blue shapes, the fish was rewarded if they swam towards the one with five shapes. This indicated they knew one extra shape had been added to the original image. On the other hand, if the images contained yellow shapes, the fish received a treat for choosing the image with three shapes. The researchers say most of the fish learned to pick the right color.

To make sure the fish were not simply associating blue with more and yellow with less, the researchers set up a new challenge.

They presented the animals with the option of adding one or two shapes if shown the blue images and subtracting one or two shapes if shown yellow images. Most of the fish answered correctly.

The team claimed that the fish can handle basic math, but

another scientist disagrees because fish don't have a cerebral cortex in the brain that is for complex cognitive tasks. The scientist thought that fish were selecting the image that looks the most similar to the

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one they had previously seen. There's no arithmetic here, just more and less and similar.

Based on the current finding, I think it is hard to tell if fish can be trained to do basic math. Let us keep exploring and researching, we will find more interesting and meaningful things.

4-312-Enchi from Helen's class

first round short story

Floppy Goes Camping

Floppy and his family just moved to Seattle from across the country. Floppy is a six-month old Golden Retriever. He is a good boy, although he could be a bit naughty sometimes.

Seattle is beautiful, with many tall evergreen trees and lakes and creeks. "This looks like a great

place for a dog!" Floppy looked forward to his new life here.

However, because the family is new to town, they don't know many people here. Floppy felt lonely. Even though he had gone to dog parks multiple times, and others seemed nice, he

hadn't made any new friend yet. This summer is especially rainy. Floppy missed his friends back

home where he played with them often.

It all changed on a cloudy Saturday afternoon, when Floppy heard his family discussing something. Mom said: "Good news! We just signed up for a group camping trip! It will be in a beautiful state park by the sea." "A camping trip!" Floppy got excited. "I can chase rabbits and

go fishing! I can make new friends!” Floppy was hopeful again. He even helped the family packing for the trip. He couldn’t wait!

The day finally arrived. Floppy was so happy even the squishy two-hour car ride didn’t bother him. When his family arrived at the camp site, there were already some other families there. Even though Floppy’s family didn’t know them, because this group camping was organized by a local charity, they knew they have similar interests and passion. The other families even helped Floppy’s family to set up tent and prepare for dinner.

The next three days and two nights were full of fun activities. They went for a hike and walked on the beach. Floppy was able to find many mini-crabs and other marine life. At night,

Floppy watched kids roasted marshmallows. He licked the ones that fell on the ground. They were delicious! Every morning, Floppy woke up by the pleasant birds chirping sounds. The other

families also loved Floppy. They came to pet him, walked him, and kids played with him. Floppy

learnt that the better he behaved, the more play time he got. This helped Floppy be an even better dog.

Good times flew by. When the camping trip came to an end, Floppy no longer felt lonely and homesick: “The Seattle freeze is not true. You just need to know how to find where you belong. Your community will help you be a better person (dog)! ”

second round essay

Can fish do math?

Explain how scientists tested weather and how the fish could do math. Why do some people doubt their findings?

Do you have a pet fish? Normally, we would think fishes are just things you feed and look at. Fish are cold blooded and many people think they are not as good at thinking as mammals. However, some believe fish can do math. First, let’s talk about research to prove that

fish can do math. We'll talk about how they do it. Then, we will talk about doubts from others.

First, in Germany a team proved fish can do math. Here is how they did it. There are 2

images shown in front of a fish. The fish only have 5 seconds to memorize the images. The blue

shapes mean addition. There were 4 blue shapes but after 5 seconds, they disappear and have

answers for them to choose. The same thing happens to yellow except that it is subtracting. So

they think fish can do math.

Next, we'll listen to a person from California, San Diego, Rafael Nunez's doubts. He said

that they weren't doing math; they're just choosing the picture that is the most similar to the first

image. The German leader disagrees and thinks that they can and she wishes fish would be treated the same way we treat other animals.

So, what do you think? Would you stand with German team or would you be with

Rafael? Either way, this is a fun and meaningful research.

grade 3:

4-50-Matthew from Max's class

first round short story

An Unforgettable Family Trip

I don't know what your ideal family trip is, but it surely doesn't include being

late for the train, getting stuck in a terrifying storm, and feeling lost in the woods.

That's how my family trip was like last summer. Surprisingly, this seemingly horrible trip turned into a lovely and unforgettable experience.

On an early morning last July, we were about to start our trip when Dad was

caught up with emergency work. My eyebrows knitted together as the train departure

time passed. Oh no! My head and shoulder slumped.

Mom patted me softly. "Don't worry. Maybe we can drive there."

Just then Dad was done and nodded gleefully, "I found a new route on GPS!"

My eyes lit up instantly. I vigorously rushed to the door and exclaimed, "What are we waiting for? The adventure begins!"

The route was quite different from other mundane roads I'd ever seen. There were brilliant flowers blooming with fantastic colors. Dad put on joyful music, Mom started to sing along, and I joined in clapping merrily.

"This wasn't a disastrous beginning after all," I thought to myself while enjoying the breeze brushing against my face. I soon fell into a comfortable nap.

Suddenly, I was awoken by horrifying thunderstorms rumbling in the distance.

In a split second, buckets of rain poured down and the wind shields started swishing frantically. Dad clenched the steering wheel, and I could hear my hammering heart going thump, thump, thump. Everything seemed blurry.

To be safe, Dad pulled off the highway, but unfortunately, the GPS lost signal.

After driving aimlessly for a while, Dad stopped the car and parked in the middle of an enormous forest. My face crinkled up as I peered outside, thinking to myself, "At least, things can't go any worse."

"At least—" Mom smiled cheerfully— "we are safe and dry!" While wiping Dad's sweaty head, Mom suggested we could do some fun activities while waiting for the rain to stop.

Dad and I liked the suggestion. Fantastic ideas started popping out. We began with a silly confession of "most embarrassing thing that ever happened." I could hardly believe that my elegant mom had once accidentally walked into the boy's restroom and scared the following boy who thought he went into the wrong room.

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Dad's story was even more awkward: He sent a love message to the wrong girl by mistake. I laughed so hard that tears almost streamed down my face.

Throughout the afternoon, we made up all sorts of hilarious games and jokes and shared formerly unknown memories. It was like seeing my parents through a whole new lens. Our hearts had never felt so close. In the whole wide world, this magical place inside the car seemed to be the only spot left and was filled with happy laughter so loud that even the storm faded. Before we knew it, the splatter of rain tapered off, and the forest was washed sparkling and squeaky clean.

"Look!" I pointed out the window excitedly. Stretching across the sky was a beautiful rainbow glittering splendid colors. The beauty was simply beyond words, and we were so captivated by the marvelous sight that we held our breath for the moment. I wanted to take a picture of it with my eyes, frame it with my admiration, and cherish it in my heart forever. My heart burst with amazing bliss. I wished I could take this moment and stretch it to eternity.

Did we get to the beach that day? Nope. Even so, it was an incredible trip. It did not happen for the best, but we made the best of what happened. The happy moments and the fascinating sights are now treasures in my heart that remind me if we stay together as a loving family, we can always get through the harsh times and see the glorious rainbow together.

second round essay

Intelligence or Coincidence? Fish Can Learn!

As a group of vibrant cute fish swim around using their super math powers to tackle all sorts of problems, scientists clench their sweaty fists as they are about to make a colossal discovery. Many

people may think this is just a fantasy like what's seen in Finding Nemo, but scientists have proved

through reliable research that fish are capable of absorbing math skills.

First and foremost, researchers from Germany's University of Bonn tested their theory with rigorous experiments by giving little fish roughly 5 seconds to memorize the numbers from a blue

board that stands for addition and yellow boards that stand for subtraction. They would be rewarded

if they swam toward the biggest blue number and swam to the smallest in the yellow. It's clear that

there are multiple layers of testing variables such as color, numbers, and shapes. As the team

reported, more than half of the tested fish succeeded, especially in recognizing more objects. The

results clearly show that fish are teachable in learning basic math skills.

Going beyond the basic recognition testing, the research team also tried to challenge the fish with more advanced tests. As the team leader explained, "we deliberately left out some calculations

during training." For instance, three minus one or three plus one with other variations. Very

impressively, the fish managed to complete the problems. However, not all people bought their

research. One scientist from the University of California, for example, argues that the fish weren't

learning math but only remembering the similar shapes. One case was that when the fish were to

choose the blue, they weren't choosing the more shapes but the similar ones. In addition, other

people protest that it could be possible that the fish were not comparing the quantity but giving a

natural reaction to the color. Their doubts could all be resolved when they took a deeper look into

the research.

In response to these arguments, the original team set new challenges to ensure that the fish

did not associate with color or similar shapes only. This time, the research teams presented the fish

with one or two more blue shapes and one or two fewer shapes for the yellow ones. As the leader

pointed out, the fish now needed to make the right decision with both colors and quantity of shapes.

Therefore, succeeding these advanced tests required higher level and more complex thinking skills.

In conclusion, given the complexity of these tests, the fish are proved to be able to do basic math.

Although some might be suspicious, the bold evidence from the researchers suggests fish are

indeed intelligent creatures and can be taught to learn math skills. For all the fish in the world living

in fishbowls, ponds, aquariums or the ocean, communication with them will be more interesting,

complicated, and fun.

5-297-Annie from Max's class

first round short story

The Two Cats

The sun was setting in the sky. It was a cold day and a beautiful medium-sized ginger she-cat with amber eyes caught a glimpse of brown fur scurrying across the grass towards a hole in the undergrowth. It was a mouse. The scent drifted into her nose. The she-cat crept towards it, keeping as quiet as she could. When she was close enough, she sprang, grasping the mouse with her claws and killed it with one swift bite. She took a bite of the mouse and found out that mice were way tastier than the food that her owner, Owen, gave her.

“Amber! What are you doing? Come back inside!”

It was her owner. As quickly as she could, Amber ate the delicious mouse she caught and bounded back inside.

The house was warm and dry. In Amber's room, there was a soft, puffy, purple chair that she liked to sit on. On the wall there were cat paintings that had been there ever since she came into the house. There also was a soft rainbow colored rug on the floor. At the edge of the room, there was Amber's large pink, fluffy bed. Amber loved the color pink and was very glad to have the bed all to herself. Right in front of her lies her food bowl, which was designed with tiny roses and was stacked high with food.

"Amber, we're getting a new cat. Remember to be nice to her!" Owen called out.

"Dang!" Amber thought. She liked to be alone because she did not want to share her cozy bed with anyone. She was still awake in the night thinking about what she would do with the new cat until she finally fell asleep.

A few mornings later, Amber woke up and came face to face with the new large she-cat that has blazing green eyes and a pelt with soft, golden fur.

"Alright, so aren't we supposed to share this thing?" the new cat asked. She pointed her paw at the bed.

"Why do you ask and who told you that? Anyways, what is your name? Mine is Amber," Amber meowed.

"My name is Lily, but why won't you share this bed with me?" Lily replied coldly.

"Because the bed is mine, not yours!" Amber snorted impatiently.

"Then at least show some kindness and let me sleep on the bed for one day and on the floor the next day," Lily snapped.

"Well, I can decide if I want to share the bed with you at all," Amber spat.

The two cats' argument went on and on, and when it seemed impossible for them to agree on sharing the bed, they started fighting. Lily pounced onto Amber. Amber

hurled herself towards Lily's belly and pinned her down. The two cats wrestled, fought, bit, and scratched, until Lily bit down on Amber's shoulder and pinned her down. Pain stabbed through her. Right at that moment, Amber knew she was going to lose, but before Lily could aim another strike, Owen came in and inspected the bite in Amber's shoulder and the scratches on Lily's back. His brown eyes blazed with anger as soon as

he realized that the two cats had been fighting. He looked down at Amber. "Uh oh. This isn't going to be good," Amber thought.

"Didn't I tell you to be nice to Lily, Amber!" Owen scolded.

"Only if that idiot didn't jump on me and start damaging my body," Amber meowed.

"OK, I can guess that you cats have been fighting over this bed. Amber, treat others how you want to be treated!"

Amber realized that Owen was right. She shouldn't have been selfish because it wasn't the right thing to do, so she admitted that she had been wrong to not share the bed and Lily forgave her.

"Now let's go to the vet to care for your injuries," Owen said.

When they got to the vet, they met the veterinarian, and he looked at their wounds. Then, he wiped the blood off using some wipes, dabbed on some tannish colored powder that stung so badly, and wrapped it in long, white, foamy strips.

Later on, they had both recovered. The powder vanished and their fur grew back.

They didn't want to get bitten and scratched again, so they always avoided fights and came up with solutions when they had disagreements. Every day, they shared food and groomed each other's fur with long, gentle strokes. Amber even taught Lily how to hunt.

They always hunted every day they could get outside. Every night, they slept together and looked like a bundle of soft fur. They were very protective of each other and became best friends.

second round essay

Do you know that fish can do basic math? Well, scientists tested the fish which proved they could do basic math. These are some ways they tested the fish.

The team was at Germany's University of Bonn. The team leader was Vera Schluessel. She and her team tested the fish. One thing they were tested on was that they were given two cards with four squares, circles or triangles. The color of the shapes was either blue or yellow. They were given five seconds to find the number and color of the shapes. After that, they were given two more cards, one card with five squares and the other with three squares. If the shapes had the color blue, then fish were rewarded with food when they swam towards the card with five shapes. This meant that they could find out one shape had been added to the picture. After that, the fish had to swim towards the card that had three shapes and included at least one yellow shape, to get another treat.

The next thing they were tested on was addition and subtraction, by adding or subtracting one. When they were tested on this, they often got the right answer. They also found out that the fish thought addition was easier than subtraction, just like a lot of kids do.

Some people doubted that the people who tested the fish were right. One person called Rafael Núñez said that the fish aren't adding or subtracting, instead, they are choosing the image that looks most similar to the one they had seen in the previous question. He might have said that because he doesn't believe that fish can do basic math.

I believe the fish are surprisingly smart. The tests they did were very well and most of them chose the correct answer. All in all, these tests her team did proved that fish can do basic math.

3-74-Andrew from Max's class

first round short story

Gerald

“Swish, Swish,” the sound of leaves moving seemed to echo through the farm. Winter is coming, that also means that the time has come for Christmas. One of the chickens will be killed for Christmas dinner...and the chicken was Gerald.

Gerald was one of the twelve chicks that were hatched in winter. He had fuzzy yellow feathers when he was born. Now he is white and black. His favorite food was corn. Gerald was 2 years old now.

Hector never wished Gerald was going to be slaughtered. Gerald was the cutest chicken ever! But Hector's parents didn't think so. He devised a plan to persuade his mom and dad not to kill Gerald.

The neighbors probably wondered “Where is Hector going on that bike?” Well, if you follow him all the way, you will end up at Bob's and Bill's Toy Shop. Hector went into the girl's section, then the dress hall. It has hundreds of dresses. Some were too big; others were too small.

“Perfect,” exclaimed Hector. A sparkly white dress it was. The only problem was, seventy-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents was the price! But Hector only had thirty-two dollars and seventy-four cents.

Suddenly a dress that was jay blue caught Hector's eye. Even better, it was only ten dollars! He grabbed the dress and then ran to the cashier. "Ten dollars sir," replied the cashier in a low voice. Hector fished the correct amount of money out of his bag.

After speeding home on his bike, he decided he would put the dress on Gerald the day before Christmas came, then his parents would think that Gerald was too cute to be killed. But still, Christmas was a month and a half away. Hector had to hide it away from his two sisters, so they didn't play with it and mess it up. He had some close calls, like once when they were going out to church, Hector's sisters Grace and Abigail were sent up to call him to go. He was checking if the dress was still there where it is

supposed to be, it was. Suddenly, he heard the old floorboards creaking as if it was telling Hector someone was coming upstairs. Hector quickly threw the dress into a box. Then he put the box in the closet just in time.

"Hector, time to go," shouted one of his sisters as the door creaked open. "Okay, coming," replied Hector quickly as he got out of bed. On the way to church he wondered if Grace or Abigail saw him with the dress. Another time the dress was on his bed and Hector's mother walked in on him to get a piece of paper, but luckily, she did not see the dress.

After a while, the day before Christmas came. Hector grabbed a coat and the dress, when the path to the chickens was clear, he snuck into the chicken coop to put the dress on Gerald. The dress slipped on easily. After

shutting the door on the coop Hector went inside. The final hours came. Finally, Hector heard his mom shout in amazement, "Wow, Gerald is so cute in that dress I don't want to kill him!" And she was right Gerald was saved for a year and instead they bought a chicken from the supermarket. Hector was very happy that he didn't have to eat Gerald.

second round essay

Can Fish Do Math

A team at the University of Bonn said and proved that fish can do basic math. They got images with either four, squares, circles, or triangles.

They gave the fish (stingrays and zebrafish) five seconds to remember the color and number of the shapes. Each image was either fully blue or yellow. Then the fish saw new images, the blue image had five and the yellow had three.

The way the researchers tell that the fish could do the math was, if blue was the color the fish would swim to the one with five shapes. Then the fish that did would get food. This one was a test about addition, it showed that the fish new one image had an extra shape in it. The question is like $4+5$.

If yellow was the color. The fish would swim to the one with three shapes. If they did they would get treats. If they swam to the one with four shapes they would not get treats. To both kinds of fish subtraction was harder. $\frac{6}{8}$ of the zebrafish and half of the stingrays got the question right, by swimming to the image with three shapes.

Then the researchers did another test. Which were with the questions 3-1 and 3+1. After the fish saw the images. The animals got most of the questions right again.

What if the fish thinks blue with more and yellow with less? That's why the researchers did the final test. They gave the fish a choice of adding

one or two if blue was the color. And subtracting one or two for the color yellow. Most of the fish swam to the one with one as the difference. Showing that the fish mastered plus one and minus one.

One the other hand, some people don't think that fish can do math. Rafael, a professor at the University of California says that the fish are just going to the image that looks the most similar. Rafael says, "in the case of blue, the most similar but more, and in the case of yellow, the most similar but less."

Now do you think that fish can do simple math?

grade 4:

3-420-Lily from Maggie's class

first round short story

The Undersea Treasure

It was a beautiful spring morning. The bright sun had risen into the sky, painting it red and orange. Reflected on the calm ocean surface were the silhouettes of birds flying. A salty sea breeze blew. Dawn, a blonde and blue-eyed girl, was relaxing on her white boat. From her birth, she possessed a special power: she could talk to animals and completely understand their language. Suddenly, she heard a desperate voice coming from the water: "Help!" She rushed to the side of the boat and saw a gray dolphin tangled in a fishing net, thrashing helplessly.

"Don't worry! I'm coming!" She hurriedly swam to the dolphin, cut the net with a knife, and freed the dolphin. It was starving, so she gave it some fish to eat. The dolphin gratefully said, "You saved my life! Thank you!"

"You're welcome," Dawn said. "What's your name?"

"Kali."

"How did you get trapped in that net?"

"I was talking to some tuna when a ship caught us in a net. The net was broken when a shark attacked us. The tuna escaped, but I was still trapped. I drifted until you rescued me," Kali told her. "How can I ever repay you?"

Dawn thought for a bit. "We could go treasure hunting."

Kali exclaimed, "That's perfect! I've always wanted to find treasure! Let's meet at the harbor next week."

The following Sunday, Dawn met Kali at the harbor. Dawn said, "Look at the submarine I brought! It has an airlock so we can go out and in. The control panel has a lever to move the airlock door. I packed some fish for you to eat and walkie-talkies to communicate. Now, we are ready to go exploring. Let's start diving!"

They dived under the surface until they came to a rainbow-colored reef. Kali called to Dawn, "Look at that pretty coral reef! I will go outside for a while to say hi to friends." She saw her friend Norman, an eel who was relaxing on scarlet coral under beams of sunshine. "Hi Norman, I'm searching for treasure. Do you know where there might be some?"

He responded, "Not around here, Kali, but I heard that there is a lot of sunken treasure in the deep sea from my friend Lomi, a humpback whale. She knows what treasure is on the seafloor."

"But how can we find her?" Kali asked.

"I saw her filter feeding on huge schools of silver mackerel yesterday in deeper water," Norman replied.

"Cool. We'll try to find her." Dawn steered the submarine for a while. Then, they saw a humpback whale gliding past them, illuminated by the light shining down from the ocean surface.

"Lomi?" Kali asked. "We're treasure hunting nearby. Can you help us, please?"

"Nice! There's a shipwreck just a little bit north with hidden treasure," Lomi replied. "Good luck, my friends!"

They drove on into the darkness of the deep sea. Suddenly, the submarine started to shake violently and an eerie, thumping sound came from outside. Two giant tentacles curled around their submarine, clenching it tightly. Kali yelled, "Hey! What happened?" Dawn turned on the light and saw an enormous glowing eye staring at them from outside. It was a red giant squid with suckers as big as a dinner plate. "Hey! Let go of our submarine!" shouted Kali.

"Oops. Sorry, I thought you were a fish." The squid loosened its tentacles and glided off.

"It's okay," Kali replied with relief. "Do you happen to know of any shipwrecks nearby?"

“Keep going deeper down, little captains, and you will see the shipwreck .”

They dived deeper and saw an ancient ship lying on the seabed, broken in half. They swam inside, awed by the immensity of it. Inside, a chest with a broken, rusty lock covered in seaweed rested on the rotted wooden floor. Dawn gently opened it and found shining gold and jewels lying in it. Dawn and Kali carefully lifted the treasure out. They drove up to the shore, and suddenly, the submarine came to a stop. Kali told Dawn, “The propeller is stuck in seaweed. What should we do?”

A scarlet tentacle as thick as a tree trunk curled its tip and ripped the seaweed off magically.

Kali beamed, “Thanks again, super squid!”

They drove on as the darkness of the deep sea faded to light blue and saw Lomi breaching in white foamy waves. Dawn asked, “Lomi! Do you want some treasure?”

“No, I don’t have any use for it. But thanks, though; by the way, what are you going to do with your treasure?”

“I’m going to donate mine to a museum.”

“Good idea!”

When they arrived at the harbor, it was so hard to say goodbye, and after endless hugs, they decided to go on more adventures together later. They really did a lot, of course, with many new animal friends.

second round essay

Fish Doing Math

Can fish do math? The answer that they cannot might sound obvious.

Surprisingly, a team at the University of Bonn in Germany has found that some

fish can do basic addition and subtraction. Some people refute their research, because they believe that the fish are selecting the picture that has the greatest similarity to the previous ones.

First, scientists showed two pictures to freshwater stingrays and zebrafish, each with four shapes. The fish had to memorize the color and number of the shapes, which were all blue or yellow. If the shapes were blue, the fish received food on the condition that they swam to the image with five shapes. This proved they were aware that one shape had been added to the original shapes. In contrast, if the images were yellow, they were rewarded for choosing the one with three shapes. Over time, more than half of the fish learned to select the right color. They did well with addition, but like most children, found subtraction to be harder. Second, researchers tested if the fish could relate their new skills to new tasks. They left out the calculations $3+1$ and $3-1$ on purpose during instruction. Even in the harder new tests, the fish regularly chose the correct answer. Finally, to make sure the fish were not associating blue to greater and yellow to less, scientists assembled a new test. They gave the fish options of adding one or two shapes if presented with blue pictures. Similarly, they let the fish make the choice to subtract one or two shapes for yellow images. Again, the fish mostly selected the image with one more or one less shape. This demonstrates that they had learned the rule of adding or subtracting one. The fish had to recognize how many objects there were and guess the rule from their color. They had to remember them and calculate the result later. That is a significant achievement that requires complicated thinking skills.

Some people are not convinced of the fishes' skills. For instance, Rafael Núñez, a scientist who studies thinking, argues that the fish are not adding or subtracting. Instead, they are choosing the picture that looks the most similar to

the one they had previously seen.

Scientists discovered that fish can do basic math. Some people argue that the fish are selecting the one that looks most similar to the one they had last seen. However, I believe that the complexity of the tasks is an indication that they have mastered basic math. In their habitat, they recognise many shades of color, escape predators, find food, and calculate how much food they need to bring back to their babies using math. Baby fish might even go to math class. They lead a happy life, just like us humans.

3-68-Cheryl from Maggie's class

first round short story

Mara's Amazing Bubble of Magic Forms

In the village of Lockwood lived a little girl called Mara. Mara had been residing in the same little cottage there ever since her parents had died a long time ago.

It all happened suddenly, when one morning, Mara woke up to find the ground shaking. The house was grumbling, and the ground slid under her feet. Just when the bookshelf was about to topple over on her, the shaking stopped. Mara walked outside, and saw that her neighbor was mowing the lawn as always, the kids were still playing soccer, and Aunt Marge was doing her yoga.

Mara asked a nearby child, "Did you feel the ground shaking by any chance?"

The little girl replied, "What in the world are you talking about? I never felt anything!"

Mara widened her eyes as she headed back inside her house. Mara decided to take a walk. So, she put on a bonnet, dressed in her finest clothes, and locked the front door. Then, she set off onto the path that lay before her cottage.

As soon as Mara started walking, she felt someone following her, so she quickly turned around, but the only person in sight was a woman who looked like her neighbor, Mrs. Allen who kept on glancing up while she pretended to read the newspaper. Hmm, that's funny. Mara thought. The newspaper she's holding is from last week. She turned back around and started walking again, towards the park, where everyone was playing. She sat on a bench.

She felt a feeling of not being safe looming over her, so she started in the direction of her cousin Lily's house.

DING-DONG! DING-DONG! Mara pressed the doorbell to Lily's house. The door opened, and there stood Frank, Lily's father, standing there.

"Hello, Mara. Welcome in, my dear. Did you come for Lily?" he said.

"Yes, uncle. Could Lily go to my house? We need to work on an experiment," Mara answered.

"Yes, of course. Let me go get Lily," Frank exclaimed.

Frank was back in a minute, with Lily at his side. As soon as Lily saw Mara, she said, "How fancy you look! I feel like something suspicious is going—"

"SHHHHH! Quiet!" Mara interrupted. She cringed at Frank, then grabbed Lily by the arm and pulled her onto the grassy plains, where a path was engraved to her house.

They were sitting at the kitchen table. "Lily, something weird is going on," Mara said. "This lady keeps on following me, and she has an expired newspaper. She

also has a lime green phone.”

Lily told her not to worry about it. She then saw a loose floor tile, so she tried to put it back. But by accident, she tripped and pulled the tile out. What was uncovered was a room!

She moved the other tiles and stepped in. Mara stepped in, and when she did, she saw millions of paintings. The room was very pretty. There was a dance floor, some sparkly dresses, and even golden lamps!

Lily screamed excitedly. She looked at every painting, and when she touched a painting of a realistic watermelon, the whole thing shook and fell off. Inside, what seemed like a count of millions in money was laid. “We’re rich!” Mara squealed.

“Well, not so fast, Mara. I have wanted to help for so long! Don’t you recognize me?” a voice suddenly spoke.

The girls turned around and saw the mysterious lady that Mara had seen earlier. Mara recognized her immediately. “Mrs. Allen? Is that you?”

“Of course, Mara. Now, join me in a dance tonight, would you?” Mrs. Allen said with an evil grin.

Lily saw this and said, “Mara, no! It’s a trap!”

“What?!” Mara said. “What are you talking about?”

“Look, Mara. She just grinned weirdly and she also talks way differently than Mrs. Allen,” Lily exclaimed.

“Fine, sorry, but I can’t come to the dance,” Mara sighed.

Suddenly, they heard sirens. Their neighbor, who had heard Lily scream when they saw the room, had mistakenly called the police. But it was no mistake now! The police knocked on the door and came in. They put “Mrs. Allen” in handcuffs and left.

When the crowd disappeared, Mara said, “Lily, today I felt shaking. But when

I went outside, it seemed like nobody—”

“SAME! Frank told me so I know what happened. A long time ago, my great-great-grandfather had magic in his body. He soon was married to your great-great-grandmother. They both had magic in their body, so they could feel and touch the things normal people can’t,” Lily exclaimed.

“So, that means our ‘magic bubble’ has finally popped and released?” Mara questioned.

“Exactly,” Lily said.

This is just the beginning of a long-lasting magical journey. Mara thought. I wonder what will happen next time my “magic bubble” expands!

second round essay

Guess what? Fish can do basic math! This is very surprising news to us since we never knew that fish could really do basic math. This fact was discovered at Germany's University of Bonn, where a group worked with some freshwater stingrays and colorful zebrafish. The group showed the fish two pictures of 4 squares, circles, or triangles in the colors blue and yellow. The fish were given five seconds to memorize the images, then the team showed the fish two different pictures. One picture showed three squares while the other showed five. If the images contained blue shapes, the fish was rewarded with a treat if they swam towards the one with five shapes. Four out of the eight stingrays got it right and six out of the eight zebrafish got the addition problem right.

Just like us people, many fish found subtraction to be much more challenging than addition. The article states, “The researchers then tested to see if the fish could apply their newly-learned math skills to new tasks they had not been exposed to. ‘To check this, we deliberately left out some calculations during training,’ explains study leader Vera Schluessel.” This shows that the fish will start to adapt to new math problems soon. And

even so, the fish got these questions right.

Even so, some people still don't believe that fish can do basic math. For example, Rafael Núñez, a scientist at a university in San Diego argues that this is not true. He thinks that the fish are just selecting the picture that looks more similar to the one they just saw. But Schluessel and her team stand strong. They say: "It's very clearly a plus one or minus one decision, as opposed to just choosing based on more or less." Schluessel thinks that fish should deserve to be treated with more respect.

This is what I think: Rafael Núñez might be right, but I agree with Schluessel.

There could be a big possibility that the fish actually can do math. And also, if fish are selecting the picture that looks more similar to the one they just saw, doesn't that require math and thinking too? So either way, fish can do basic math.

So, not only humans can do math, but animals can too! Let's hope that one day, someone finds something that proves Rafael Núñez wrong, and proves that fish can do basic math.

3-81-Fay from Maggie's class

first round short story

The Coin in the Grass

"Josh! Where is my toy?!" Amaya shouted.

"Nah, nah," Josh said while blowing a raspberry.

Amaya started chasing Josh. Josh ran out the front door holding her plushie that she loved. Amaya regularly didn't go outside, but her brother's taunting was just too annoying. She

ran out the door chasing him. After running for a long time she stopped, panting. Suddenly, she

saw a glint of light. She picked up the silver coin lying in the grass.

“It’s just a coin,” said Amaya, flicking it. Right when she was going to continue pursuing him, the coin stopped in mid-air and started to spin. Amaya turned around, awestruck. As the coin spun faster, a vortex appeared, pulling her in. The wind pushed the struggling Amaya into the portal.

Amaya woke up lying in a bed. She adjusted her eyes to the sudden brightness of the room. There was a small figure.

“Who are you?” Amaya said nervously.

“I am... Henry the Frog!” Henry said, revealing himself.

“WAIT! Henry?! Wha- I don’t understand! You-but-I,” Amaya sputtered, while reeling back.

“I know why you’re confused. You have dreamt of me. I am a ‘dreamee.’ I am just like an employee. You are an employer, a dreamer. C’mon, let me show you everybody else,” said Henry the Frog.

He hopped away quickly. Henry looked more like a toy than a frog. Amaya walked out with him, warily.

Amaya’s emotion changed quickly. She gasped in surprise when she stepped outside. It was all the plushies she dreamt of.

“Prince the Lion! Francis the Turtle! Winston the Dog!” Amaya said.

“Yup! All of these dreamees are real.” said Henry the Frog. Amaya ran toward them with awe.

“Wait a sec, how long has it been?” asked Amaya as she returned. She had asked that question, because Winston’s behavior made her think about her dad, back in the real world.

“One month for your world, one days for us,” replied Henry.

“WHAT?! I have to go home. Have you seen a coin? My parents must be so worried!” said Amaya, nervously.

“I do have it,” said Henry, “but I won’t let you have it!”

Henry’s sudden change surprised her. He ran away with Amaya racing after him. She tried her best, but racing after a frog? Impossible.

“Dreamees! Come!” gasped Amaya, still trying to catch her breath.

Prince the Lion, Francis the Turtle, and Winston the Dog came to her.

“I have to get that coin back from Henry!” said Amaya.

They nodded without a question, and ran off. Amaya followed them.

As they neared the place Amaya had stayed, she saw a shadow move in there.

“Quick! Over there!” said Amaya, pointing at the house.

“Hi-YA!” The toys said while kicking the door.

Henry rushed out, holding the coin. Prince rushed after him. Francis dived into a nearby river, and followed him, occasionally lifting his head up to take a breath. As for Winston, he stayed near Amaya as she chased Henry. Henry had deliberately brought them to a battle arena.

“I challenge you to a battle! Winner gets the coin,” said Henry.

“I accept!” shouted Amaya.

Winston said, “Amaya, get a weapon.”

Amaya found a rusty looking sword lying on the ground. It seemed like it was telling her to pick it up, so she did. It was perfect.

Winston shouted, "Start battling!"

Amaya charged at him with her sword aimed at Henry. Her wild side had been woken up in her. Henry gracefully leaped up into the sky while brandishing his dagger. Amaya turned around just in time to see Henry about to leap onto her. She dodged it by rolling away. She stood

up again and ran toward him. As Henry jumped, she spun around, and when he landed, she pinned him down. Henry wiggled away. Amaya turned around in a failing effort to locate him.

Then, she saw a shadow. It was holding a dagger. She held up her sword just in time to deflect

the blow. Henry fell to the floor with a sickening 'crack' noise.

"Do you wish to continue, Henry?" asked Winston.

"N-n-no," stammered Henry.

"Then Amaya gets the coin!" shouted Winston, triumphantly.

Amaya grabbed the coin from Henry.

"I don't get it. Why did you do this?" questioned Amaya.

"I just wanted you to stay. I was lonely by myself. All the other dreamers had each other."

"Fine. You can come to my house," said Amaya, feeling sorry for him.

She threw the coin back in the air and the portal reappeared. She walked inside of it holding the hurt Henry. As she tumbled out, all of the dreamers came out with her. The portal slammed shut.

“Hey, wait! I only said Henry!” said Amaya, “Now I have to take care of everyone!”

second round essay

Scientists have made a discovery about fishes. Studies have shown that fishes can actually do simple math! Aquatic animals can be very smart, including fishes. Although it may be surprising, fishes can figure out who is their owner from a group of humans, but not only can they recognize their owner, fishes also are quick learners.

A team of scientists from Germany’s University of Bonn worked with colorful zebrafish and freshwater stingrays. They were testing if all of them could do easy math. The scientists gave the ocean animals two images, each with four squares, triangles, or circles. The fish had five seconds to remember those two images. The pictures either were completely yellow or completely blue.

Afterwards, they gave the fish and the stingray two new images. One of the images had five squares, the other one had three. The animals had to swim to the one with five squares if the two images beforehand were blue. If the images were yellow then they would have to swim to the opposite one. The article stated, “The researchers say over time, six of the eight zebrafish and four of the eight stingrays learned to pick the right color, especially when it came to addition.” Subtraction was harder for them, just like many young children.

To test this new theory even more, they purposely left out some problems for the two specimens to figure out. The study leader, Vera Schluessel said, “Namely, $3+1$ and $3-1$. After the learning phase, the animals got to see these two tasks for the first time. But even in those tests, they often chose the correct answer.” They wanted to make sure that

the fish wasn’t just assuming blue was more and yellow was less, so they thought of a new problem.

They gave the animals the choice of adding one or two shapes if presented with the blue image and subtracting one of two shapes if shown the color yellow. This was

complete proof that the animals had learnt the rule of addition and subtraction.

Sadly, some people didn't believe that trained aquatic animals can use addition

and subtraction. Rafael Núñez, a scientist, says, "In the case of blue, the most similar but

more, and in the case of yellow, the most similar but less. There's no [math] here, just more and less and similar." But the other scientists stand by their theory.

She believes that, "It's very clearly the plus one or minus one decision, as opposed to just

choosing based on more or less."

She hopes that her team's findings will encourage people to treat fishes like

equals. Aquatic animals are all very smart creatures when trained. Fishes can be smart just like us. The scientists' research has been a lot of info to us. Although some people don't believe it, fishes are actually really smart.

grade 5:

sd-107-Amy from Nicholas's class

first round short story

Unidentified Flying Object

Paul stood fearlessly on the rocky cliff. His chestnut-brown hair blew in the howling wind as Paul's

brown eyes were locked on the soaring vehicle. The ground shook as the massive circular object swooped in,

nearly crashing against Paul's head. It flew around Paul countless times until a blinding blue light appeared

from the bottom of the object, and suddenly, Paul disappeared.

It felt like days before Paul touched solid ground. But something wasn't right—the air pressure. It

seemed as if he would be squashed as flat as a pancake if he kept staying in this delirious place. In the faraway

distance, there was yelling and racket. With his curious instinct, he took steady steps toward the noise. He

crossed a stone bridge and followed a winding pathway until he saw the weirdest thing in his life. A crowd of

green aliens, including a DJ, an alien serving drinks and snacks, and dancers dancing crazily in the flashing lights

of a silver disco ball. Paul's headache seemed worse now, and it felt like exploding. Soon he found himself

sneaking to the food, neatly laid on the table. When no eyes were focused on the table, he stealthily crawled

under the table cloth. A few minutes later, he stood up, and as quickly as a cheetah catching its prey, he grabbed

a pre-cut bagel and a container of cream cheese. He smeared the delicious white cream cheese messily over the

bagel and started munching. Suddenly a voice came out behind him.

"So, so, so," said a nasty alien voice. "What have we got here?"

Once Paul woke up, he found himself inside a small cell. His legs were tied together, and an unusually

shaped tall alien was standing outside, his eyes fixed on Paul's brown hair.

"Um," the guard mumbled. "Are you hungry?"

Was he hungry? No. But Paul wanted food anyway.

"Yes." Paul groaned.

The guard turned around and ran down the jail corridor. He brought a metal tray a few moments later

and handed it to Paul.

"Also," the alien suddenly interrupted. "Please eat your fruit and corn before eating the Jell-O."

Paul nodded, already wide-eyed. They served quality food on this alien-invaded planet! Living in this place

wasn't as bad as he thought it would be. But a strange feeling still tingled inside him—he wanted to go home.

Paul assumed it had been days before they untied the rope on his legs. Then two aliens escorted him to a

classroom. Or at least it looked like it. There was an adult alien, and around the “classroom” were bookshelves

and books. In the corner, there was a long desk and a single computer, and a grown alien was sitting in a chair

behind it, staring into the screen. Other younger aliens were standing at each shelf, searching for books. What

was this place? Paul decided to breathe in and casually walked to the desk.

“Hi,” Paul greeted confidently. “What is the name of this room?”

The alien chuckled. “It’s a library, dear,” the alien told him softly. “Why don’t you search for some

books that you like?”

Paul thought of an excuse. He did love reading, but what if the books were dangerously enchanted? He

didn’t trust this place. “I don’t like to read.”

“Hmm, what do you like to do in your spare time?” the librarian inquired.

“Swimming,” Paul informed. “I like to swim.”

“OK, do you want to go to the pool?” the alien asked. “The water just got cleaned.”

Was the pool safe? Paul started picking his nails nervously. “Umm, maybe tomorrow.”

“Sounds good,” said the alien. “Come back tomorrow, and I’ll show you where the pool is.”

The next day, when Paul woke up, he found himself sleeping in a corner. He quickly stood up and

went outside. But the air pressure was so high he had to come back inside the building. A few minutes later, the

librarian showed up.

“Hey!” she called with her usual enthusiasm. “Want to follow me to the pool now?”

“I was planning to go this afternoon,” Paul replied. “I’ll come to you when I’m ready.”

The librarian gave the OK and rushed inside the library as the young aliens lined up to go inside. Paul

wanted to wander some more and get used to the layout of the mysterious alien territory, so he walked along the

carpeted hallway until he reached a door labeled PORTAL TO HUMAN WORLD.

Paul wrestled the locked door, but it was jammed tight. He thought for a moment and ran back to the

library.

"Excuse me," Paul said desperately. "Do you happen to have a screwdriver or any thin but long tool?"

The librarian nodded quietly and opened a desk drawer, then took out a rusty screwdriver. Paul smiled

and walked back to the portal room. He inserted the screwdriver in a hole, and in a second, the door snapped

open, and he tiptoed inside. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a portal appeared. The rim was made of stone; the portal

itself had the colors of a galaxy. Paul thought for a moment and was determined to go home. He took a deep

breath and jumped into the portal, never to be seen again.

second round essay

Fish Are Smarter Than Humans Think

Pet fish may look like a plain fish gliding through the water, but they are actually intelligent and fast learners. Many studies have shown that fish can solve basic addition and subtraction problems. They can even memorize information for at most 5 months. Most people doubt this is true, but studies have proved them all wrong. Fish can solve math problems using another way of thinking, but it has the same outcome.

First, scientists have shown how fish can solve math, using a simple method of shapes and colors. In the article, "Guess What? Fish Can Do Basic Math!" when the researchers were testing fish, when they added or subtracted a shape to the 4 blue squares, "six of the eight zebrafish and four of the eight stingrays learned to pick the right color, especially when it came to addition." Fish could learn addition because they would know when a shape was added to the others. Next, they had to understand by letting them choose

to subtract or add one and “the fish largely chose the image with one more or one less shape. This proved they had learned the rule of adding or subtracting one.” Fish can probably learn lots of other types of math.

Then, to show the fish really understood, scientists asked the fish some math problems. The text states, “The researchers then tested to see if the fish could apply their newly-learned math skills to new tasks they had not been exposed to. After the learning phase, the animals got to see these two tasks for the first time. But even in those tests, they often chose the correct answer.” The fish had to solve math problems that they had never seen it before. Still, being new to addition and subtraction problems, fish picked the right answer. Scientists wanted to prove the fish weren’t just solving math problems by thinking about shapes, they set up another challenge, as the text states, “To make sure the fish were not simply associating blue with more and yellow with less, the researchers set up a new challenge. They presented the animals with the option of adding one or two shapes if shown the blue images and subtracting one or two shapes if shown yellow images.”

Humans thought of fish just as a normal pet, but have underestimated them. The article, “Guess What? Fish Can Do Basic Math!” states, “Some fish species have even mastered tool use — a skill previously believed to be only used by humans and primates like chimpanzees.” This shows some fish have been able to use tools to master certain skills.

To sum up, people can now understand more about how animals can become smart like humans. Through many studies, people can finally prove that fish can solve basic math problems using a different way of logical thinking, although some people still doubt it. With high hopes for the future, scientists hope everyone can eventually believe that animals are just as smart as humans.

1-9-Alice from Ella's class

first round short story

The Lost City of Centaurs

About ten thousand years ago, centaurs ruled the peaceful world. There was just one problem. Food was harder to find so the centaurs started stealing food from each other. Two-thirds of the centaurs died of hunger; the centaurs decided to start war.

One cold night, a lucky tree grew a red flower in the middle of the night, when all centaurs were hunting. A pod sat in the middle of the flower. A group of pixies unfolded the pod and a tiny baby was in it, deeply asleep. The baby was the first human on earth.

Twenty happy years passed, and the baby grew up into a beautiful woman. She wasn’t tiny anymore. She was strong. The pixies named her Zoe for her beauty. They made her clothes out of leaves and vines. Zoe learned to fight. She wanted to destroy all the centaurs in the world .

Zoe fought hard. She suffered many injuries. Most of the centaurs were defeated and the rest ran away and couldn't be found. When war was over, Zoe watered the lucky tree. Months later, the tree grew red flowers and were unfolded by pixies. Hundreds and hundreds of babies were sleeping. Twenty years later, they all grew into adults. Zoe taught them how to fight.

The day came and Zoe and her team of humans hid in the forest. The centaurs came out after five hours with spears. The team of humans had bows and arrows. The centaurs thought Zoe and her team weren't there yet.

When the centaurs weren't looking, the team jumped out and attacked them. The humans were too strong for the centaurs; the humans have killed the remaining centaurs.

Thirty thousand years passed and it was 1645. The lucky tree continued to grow flowers and the pixies continued to take care of it. The human population was large.

One day, a 16 year-old girl called Penelope was walking in the forest collecting beautiful flowers when she heard a growling noise from the distance. A frightened Penelope wanted to run, but was too curious so she slowly went into the direction the sound was.

A tiny half horse half human girl was lying on the dirt ground, growling, with scars on its small body.

"What is this?" asked Penelope. "I've never seen this creature. Is it lost? I feel bad for it." Penelope wanted to take it home and raise it.

Before going home, Penelope took it to the vet. When she entered the wooden building, all the workers gasped. Penelope was confused.

"Oh my," whispered Veterinarian Jack, dropping the papers he was holding. "Th-that's a centauride! He slowly walked up to Penelope and took the creature.

"Please come into my office." They quietly walked into the office.

"I found it in the forest while I was walking," Penelope said, "I thought centaurs were extinct!"

"There will be more and more of them and soon they might rule the world again, just like the legend."

"How do we change that?"

"Only a strong human can save us all. He will be armed with weapons."

"But I believe we can have peace with the centaurs and avoid violence!" exclaimed Penelope, "I want us to befriend the centaurs and—"

"Now that is the worst way for us humans," the veterinarian said calmly, "Let's say we followed your plan. The centauride gave birth to more and more of her kind. They hate humans because we have all the land and they don't. One day, they come to us armed while

we have nothing.. The centaurs and centaurides are all angry so they shoot their arrows and all of us died listening to your stupid plan.”

“Actually, Jack, my plan is more complicated than that. I plan to—”

“I want to hear no more,” said Veterinarian Jack impatiently, “I will get a knife and kill this centauride for good.”

He went into the pet surgery room. Penelope hesitantly grabbed the centauride and ran out the back door. She ran to her house and hid the centaur. Then she heard horses. Penelope ran out and saw a group of horses with men on them. She heard the veterinarian's voice.

“She’s there!”

Penelope ran inside a forest. She ran for a long time. Penelope heard noises similar to the centauride’s growls so she went in the direction of the noise. She slowly entered a dark cave. Inside was a magical city full of centaurs and food. The lost city was beautiful and full of nature. Penelope showed no violence so the centaurs and centaurides trusted her and felt safe.

She shared her food with some of the centauride and centaurs and they trusted Penelope. There were too many centaurides and centaurs to count.

Fifteen years later, Penelope trained with the centaurides and centaurs. She was ready to travel back home with her ‘family’.

The trip took two weeks. Finally, she found herself back at home. Penelope had forgotten that she was wearing nature for clothes. Men came out with weapons, but Penelope was ready. They showed no sign of violence and just smiled.

“We decided that we wanted peace,” said one centaur. “No more violence.”

The veterinarian chuckled. “Do you think we’re stupid?”

“No,” said another centaur. “We decided to give you gifts.”

The humans took it and trusted them. The relationship between humans and centaurs was peaceful. They never fought ever again because of Penelope.

second round essay

Fish Can do Basic Math

Your diminutive, muted goldfish seems mindless and does nothing but eating and swimming. Actually, fish are smarter than you think. Studies have shown that fish can remember data fast for up to five months.

Some fish species developed a special skill that humans already have – they can do basic math. A team at Germany's university of Bonn observed the colorful zebrafish and the freshwater stingrays for the study. First they were shown two images with four squares, circles, or triangles. Then they were revealed in another two images; the first one with five and the second one with three squares.

If the fish selected a picture with blue shapes, the fish were given treats. Time passed and six of the eight zebrafish and four of the eight stingrays learned to choose the right color, mostly addition. Like young children, both species thought that subtraction was more difficult.

Researchers then tested to find if the fish could put in their learned math knowledge to master new tasks that they never learned. "To check this, we left out some calculations during training," described Vera Schluessel, the leader of the study team. "Namely 3+1 and 3-1. After the learning phase, the animals got to see these two tasks for the first time. But even in those tests, they often choose the correct answer."

To confirm that the fish weren't related with fewer blue and yellow, the researchers constructed a new test. They showed the animals options of adding one or two shapes if exposed the blue images and subtracting one or two shapes if shown yellow images. Once more, a large amount of the fish chose the one with one more or one less shape. This demonstrated that they had learned the new rule of adding or subtracting one.

"So the animals had to recognize the number of objects shown and at the same time, the calculation rule from their color," Schluessel says. "They had to keep both in working memory when the original picture was exchanged for two result pictures. And they had to decide on the correct result afterwards."

The conclusion of the study published in the journal *Nature* on March 31, 2022, are especially surprising knowing fish don't have a cerebral cortex. This is part of a brain that is in charge of complicated thinking tasks.

Not everyone is convinced of the fish's math skills. Rafael Nunez, a scientist who studies thinking at the University of California. He argues that the animals aren't adding or subtracting. Instead, they are selecting the image that looks similar to the previous one.

Schlüssel states that she hopes humans should respect these creatures more.

Resources: Guess What? Fish Can Do Basic Math! By ASHLEY ALVARDO from dogonews.com

2-33-Connie from Ella's class

first round short story

THE ADVENTURE OF CLARA

My name is Clara, and I live on a hill in a village named Walington peacefully with my mother. We own a farm with cows, chickens, cats, and a dog named Cooper. I've never

seen my father, and I'm not even sure if I have one. I really want to find out more about him, but every

time I ask my mother, she says a stork brought me to her door. It's nearing my twelfth birthday,

so I think that, since I am older, my mother might tell me what happened to my father.

So I asked, "Mama, can you please tell me what really happened to my father, or if I had one?" I could tell she was thinking hard by the way she was staring at the ground, silent. I could

only hear her heavily breathing.

Finally she opened her mouth, stayed silent for a moment, then slowly said "I...I'll tell you after a week, on your birthday. I just can't gather up the courage now." So the days passed

on slowly as usual, with us tending the animals on the farm, though we both knew something would change very soon. On my birthday, as always, my mother made a homemade cake. After

starting to eat the cake, I remembered the promise about my father. I guess my mother also remembered.

In a soft voice, she said "Your father disappeared after going to travel to Canterville, a ruined village, when you were just two years old. He was an adventurer. He traveled to many

places and made many discoveries. He had gone on another trip with his friends to a far away

country. But he never came back.”

That night I thought to myself, I think I can go and find him. After all, I’m old enough to go alone. I’ve inherited the adventurous heart from my father as well. Though my mother insisted

not to, I still decided to go to Canterville to find out more about him. I also decided to take my best friends Nicole and Nick with me. So we packed up our food and got our horses from Nicole

and Nick’s horse ranch. When we were ready and about to leave, Cooper, our dog, whined and

barked, since I was his favorite human. So we set out with food, spare clothes, three horses, and of course Cooper. We had Cooper in front of me, on my horse’s mane. We kept on walking

until we came into a dark forest named Arkwood.

“Do you guys hear that noise?” Nick whispered. The whole night, we heard those strange sounds coming from the bushes around us. The next day we set out deeper into the forest. That night we heard the sounds again. This time, the sounds were closer. Out jumped a

creature coming straight towards us. We ran for our horses and mounted them quickly. Then

Cooper started barking and refused to ride on the horse. He lunged himself at the creature and

they started to fight. Nick pulled out his bow and arrow and aimed straight at the creature. With

a “thwack”, the arrow hit the creature and scared it away. We hurried on through the night. “

“Don’t you feel eyes looking at us?” Nicole whimpered. I could feel yellow eyes peeping at us from behind trees. As we finally came out of the forest, we smelled a fresh breeze and saw

vast rolling hills in front of us. All the worries we had in the forest were suddenly washed away.

“According to the map, we are about to enter Irene, one of the most beautiful and

peaceful places. It was hidden somewhere in a cave. We then heard a conch horn blowing from

our left and caught some people coming towards us. As they came closer, I noticed they were

all wearing fin tunics and riding white stallions. They were most likely from Ireness itself, so we

followed them until they disappeared into a cave.

“That must be Ireness”, I said. We also entered the cave and saw beautiful buildings as

high as the sky behind two open gates. We lived in a luxurious hotel and the kind barman there

gave us advice on going. We set out the next day and came into Canterville, some ruins of

houses next to a mountain. We kept on going until we reached the mountain. Finally we came to

an enormous cave. There was a fierce dragon with fiery orange scales napping next to multiple

piles of gold objects. Both Nick and Nicole fired an arrow at the dragon. But the scales were so

strong the arrows bounced off easily. It awoke the dragon and the dragon flew up with a mighty

roar. I saw that there was a spot with no scales on its belly. I knew this was my chance, so I

plunged the sword the barman gave me into the dragon. With a final earbusting roar, the dragon

had collapsed. Behind it were two huge doors. As we entered we saw many people trapped

inside. One man looked awfully familiar, with a gentle smile I suddenly recognized, it was my

father! We rode back to our house and lived happily ever after.