

# The Legend of the African Crowned Crane

Once, long ago, an African king became **separated** from his **companions** while out hunting in the dry grasslands. The king was lost and he did not know how to find the **oasis** where the royal court was set up. It was a hot day, and the king knew that he would die of thirst if he did not find water soon.



Zebras were **grazing** nearby. "Please help me," the king said to the zebra chief. "I must find my court. Can you lead me to it?"

The zebra chief turned away from the king. "We cannot help you, for you have hunted us."

The king then asked the elephant queen for help but she, too, refused. "We do not help those who want to kill us," she said.



The king asked the antelopes, but they also said no because they were favorite game animals of hunters such as the king.

A **flock** of long-legged, long-necked birds called cranes landed near the king. Weakly, the king begged the cranes for help. They did not turn away. Instead, the cranes brought water to the king and then, led him to his court.

The grateful king ordered his **goldsmith** to make a crown of gold for each crane. The next day, the cranes flew off wearing their crowns, but the day after that, they returned with bare heads. The cranes said that the other animals had become **envious** and angry when they saw the golden crowns. The animals had stolen the crowns and destroyed them.

The king had new crowns made, not of metal gold but of golden feathers that could not be removed. Each crane flew off wearing its gold-feather crown.

And that is how African crowned cranes received the beautiful, **shimmering** crowns of gold that they still wear today.





# The Legend of the African Crowned Crane

## KEY VOCABULARY

- **separated** (adjective) *Separated* means moved apart.
- **companions** (noun) A *companion* is a friend.
- **oasis** (noun) An *oasis* is a spot in the desert where water is found.
- **grazing** (verb) To *graze* is to feed on grass.
- **flock** (noun) A *flock* is a group of animals.
- **goldsmith** (noun) A *goldsmith* is a person who makes gold items.
- **envious** (adjective) *Envious* means jealous.
- **shimmering** (adjective) *Shimmering* means shining brightly.

- ▶ List the animals that refused to help the king find his way back to the royal court.
- ▶ Explain why the zebra chief, the elephant queen, and the antelopes refused to help the king, but the cranes did not refuse.
- ▶ Choose one of the animals from the legend. If you were that animal, what would you do if the king asked for help?
- ▶ What might the king do differently if he were lost again and wanted the zebras, elephants, or antelopes to help him?
- ▶ In your opinion, did the zebra chief, the elephant queen, and the antelopes do the right thing? Explain your answer.
- ▶ Write or discuss a new ending to the story to explain another way the African crowned crane might have received its gold-feathered crown.



## Cellphone Signals

On a hike with other campers, Lily stopped to check her cellphone. "Too bad. I can't get a signal here," she said to herself. When she looked up, she saw that she was alone, so she jogged ahead on the trail to catch up to the group.

After a few minutes, Lily knew that the campers had not taken this trail, so she ran back but wasn't sure where to stop. Her heart was beating fast from running, and from fear. She found a path and started walking on it, uphill and down through the woods. When the path **forked**, Lily sometimes went left, sometimes right. Finally, she came to a grassy clearing where she sat on a large rock and said to herself, "Stay calm, and think!"

She looked in her backpack and found an apple, a half-empty water bottle, a sweatshirt, and the useless cellphone. The back of the cellphone was shiny silver, and she saw her worried face **reflected** in it.

Lily took a sip from the water bottle, but she decided to save the apple until she was hungrier.





She pictured the counselors trying to find her. All she had to do was wait, and the clearing seemed like a good spot because she could be seen more easily in the open.

After three hours of waiting, Lily ate the apple.

It began to drizzle, and Lily put on her sweatshirt. She realized that evening was coming, and she needed better shelter. Earlier, she had noticed a rocky **overhang** in the woods. To make sure she would find the way back to the clearing in the morning, Lily collected **twigs**. She placed pairs of them in a crisscross pattern to mark her path.

Lily sat under the rock ledge, her chin resting on her knees. The rain made gentle music and, as darkness came, she **dozed off**.

The songs of birds awakened her to a sunny morning, and she followed her twig path back to the clearing.

After a while, Lily heard a loud buzzing overhead and looked up. A rescue helicopter! She leaped up and waved her arms. "Here!

I'm here!" she shouted, but it seemed that the helicopter was moving away. "Don't leave!"

Lily grabbed her cellphone and held it up, tilting its silvery back this way and that, trying to catch the sunlight. Would the flashes be seen?

News reports later told about the rescue. "Lily's cellphone had no signal," said one reporter, "but this **resourceful** camper used it to send a message anyway."



## Cellphone Signals

### KEY VOCABULARY

- **forked** (verb) To *fork* is to split into two.
- **reflected** (adjective) *Reflected* means showing or mirrored.
- **overhang** (noun) An *overhang* is a part that sticks out or hangs over something.
- **twigs** (noun) A *twig* is a small tree branch.
- **dozed off** (verb) To *doze off* is to fall asleep.
- **resourceful** (adjective) *Resourceful* means able to solve problems.

- ▶ Name four things Lily had in her backpack that helped her survive in the woods.
- ▶ Explain why Lily made a pattern with twigs on the path.
- ▶ Organize the events of the story in a timeline.
- ▶ If Lily had been able to get a cellphone signal in the woods, what might the ending have been?
- ▶ Do you agree with the reporter that Lily was a resourceful camper? Why or why not?
- ▶ Describe a new character and explain how he or she would fit into the story.

# ANIMAL FACT,

# ANIMAL FICTION

In folktales, owls are wise characters who give good advice. The **ancient** Greek goddess of wisdom, Athena, was often shown holding an owl. A person who understands many things is “as wise as an owl.” Owls’ big, staring eyes and their great hunting skills make these birds seem like thinkers. But are real owls wise?

In fact, owls are not among the smartest birds. To scientists who study learning, a smart animal is one that can solve a problem it has never seen before. Owls are not known for this **ability**. And people who train owls report that these birds are not quick to learn new tasks.

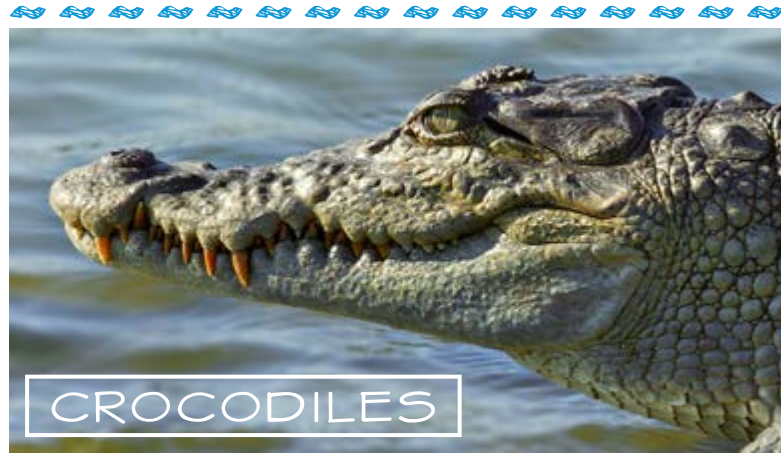


Someone who is not facing up to a problem may be compared to a different bird—an ostrich. The person is told, “Don’t be an ostrich. Don’t **bury** your head in the sand.” Does an ostrich really bury its head in the sand?

In fact, ostriches never cover their heads with sand. They need to see danger to stay safe. These big, flightless birds have sharp eyesight. They are fast runners and strong fighters. So, how did people come to believe that ostriches

bury their heads? Ostriches lower their heads to move eggs in their nest on the ground. Seen from a distance, their heads appear buried by sand. An ostrich may also lie still with its long neck stretched out on the ground as a way of hiding when it senses danger.

Sometimes, a person who is only pretending to feel sadness is compared to a crocodile. “What crocodile tears!” others say about the false show of feeling. It was reported that



crocodiles cried while eating animals they had just killed—as if they were sorry about the deed. Do crocodiles really cry tears?

In fact, crocodiles do cry tears. As the crocodile eats, bubbles form in the corners of its eyes. Tears sometimes drip down the animal’s face. The crocodile’s tears are keeping its eyes **moist**. Its tears are not caused by strong feelings, like sadness about its poor victim. The tears are caused by the action of eating. The **glands** that **produce** tears are squeezed as the animal works its mighty jaws.



Owls aren’t wise, ostriches don’t ignore danger, and crocodiles don’t show false sorrow. Some ideas about animals turn out to be more **FICTION** than **FACT**.







## Animal Fact, Animal Fiction

### KEY VOCABULARY

- **ancient** (adjective) *Ancient* means very old.
- **ability** (noun) *Ability* is the skill to do something.
- **bury** (verb) To *bury* is to put something underground.
- **moist** (adjective) *Moist* means slightly wet.
- **glands** (noun) A *gland* is an organ in the body.
- **produce** (verb) To *produce* is to make.

- ▶ Who is Athena?
- ▶ Explain why people may think that ostriches bury their heads in the sand.
- ▶ What is another example of an expression that compares a person to an animal?
- ▶ How are the myths about crocodiles, ostriches, and owls connected?
- ▶ Which animal myth is closest to reality?
- ▶ Why do you think that people created myths around animal behavior?



## Saving the Rainforests of the **OCEAN**

They are called “the rainforests of the ocean.” Like real rainforests on land, they are home to a rich **variety** of life—sea life. For example, thousands of different **species** of fish, **outrageously** colorful, may live around a single reef.

The rock-like reefs are built by coral, tiny animals related to jellyfish. Each coral is called a polyp. It is a simple **organism** with a stomach and a mouth surrounded by tentacles that it uses for feeding. It builds a hard skeleton around itself for protection. Thousands of identical polyps live together, their skeletons connecting to form a hard structure. As they live and die, new skeletons are built. The reef grows.

The living coral are closest to the **surface**. They need sunlight, so their “roommates” can provide a steady diet of food. Each polyp has plant-like algae living with it, protected by its skeleton. The algae use **photosynthesis** to create food from sunlight, sharing this food with the polyp. They also give the coral reef its color.

Thousands of living things rely on a single reef for food and shelter. When it dies, its **inhabitants** are suddenly homeless. And coral reefs are dying.

The outward sign that all or part of a reef is dying is something called "coral **bleaching**." Bleaching results when the algae in the coral are killed or driven out. There are two main causes for this: climate change and pollution.

Coral need clear water and a certain temperature range to stay healthy. Even a rise of one degree in the average water temperature hurts them. Climate change is slowly raising the temperature of the ocean. If the temperature rises around them, coral polyps are damaged and **expel** their algae. With the algae gone, the reef loses its color and the polyps starve.

Pollution also plays a part. It encourages the growth of harmful algae. This algae covers the top of the reef, blocking out sunlight. This kills the good algae and soon kills the coral.

About 30% of the world's coral reefs have died in the last 50 years. A report released in February 2011 announced that three-quarters of the existing reefs are in danger. But scientists are already at work. They are looking for ways to move heat-resistant algae into the reefs. They are finding ways to rebuild damaged reefs. With skill and luck, they will help save "the rainforests of the ocean."

**When coral reefs lose their algae, they become damaged and turn white.**



## Saving the Rainforests of the Ocean

### KEY VOCABULARY

- **variety** (noun) A *variety* is an assortment of many different things.
- **species** (noun) A *species* is a classification of living organisms.
- **outrageously** (adverb) *Outrageously* means extremely.
- **organism** (noun) An *organism* is any living thing.
- **surface** (noun) The *surface* is the outer layer.
- **photosynthesis** (noun) *Photosynthesis* is the process plants use to turn sunlight into energy.
- **inhabitants** (noun) An *inhabitant* is a person or animal that lives in a place.
- **bleaching** (noun) *Bleaching* is when all the color leaves something.
- **expel** (verb) To *expel* is to force something out.

- ▶ Describe a coral reef.
- ▶ Explain the effect of pollution on coral reefs.
- ▶ How might you use what you learned about coral reefs to help save “the rainforests of the ocean”?
- ▶ How are “the rainforests of the ocean” similar to rainforests on land? How are they different?
- ▶ Do you think scientists should be working to find ways to save the rainforests of the ocean? Why or why not?
- ▶ Imagine you are a travel agent. Keeping in mind what you learned from the text and what you may already know about coral reefs, design an ad or a travel brochure for a trip to a coral reef.



# EXPRESSIONS FROM THE ANCIENTS

Greek **myths** and legends belong to a time long gone by, but traces of them can be found in our language. Here are three expressions and the stories behind them.

## Midas Touch



Someone with the Midas touch is lucky with money and gets rich easily. Midas ruled the kingdom of Phrygia. To reward him for a kind act, the god Dionysus granted him a wish. Without thinking, the king wished that everything he touched would turn to gold. The wish was granted. The king enjoyed turning things in his garden into gold, but when he became hungry, he found he could not eat. Any food that touched him immediately turned to gold. So did his loving daughter when she tried to comfort him. Midas begged to have his wish undone, and Dionysus agreed.

## Pandora's Box



If someone opens a Pandora's box, that person creates trouble. In Greek mythology, Pandora was the first woman on Earth. Each god gave her a particular gift, such as beauty or musical talent. Zeus, the king of the gods, gave her a sealed jar (not a box) filled with all the miseries of the world. Pandora was told not to open the jar, but one of the gifts she was given was **curiosity**. She opened the jar, as Zeus must have known she would, and out flew terrible things. By the time she managed to close it again, only one thing remained because it was at the bottom of the jar: hope.

# Trojan Horse



These days, one meaning for *Trojan horse* has to do with computers. It is something that seems to be useful software but turns into a virus when installed on a computer. The original Trojan horse was built during the Trojan War. The Greeks were trying to **conquer** the Trojans, who ruled the city of Troy. This city was surrounded by a huge wall. The Greeks wanted to sneak some men into the city to open the gates. So a huge wooden horse was constructed. It was hollow, so soldiers could hide inside. Then the armies withdrew, acting as if they had given up on the war. The horse was left before the gates of Troy as a gift. The **gullible** Trojans fell for the trick and took the horse inside. Soon after, they lost the war.



## Expressions from the Ancients

### KEY VOCABULARY

- **myths** (noun) A *myth* is a kind of traditional story.
- **curiosity** (noun) *Curiosity* is interest in learning or knowing something.
- **conquer** (verb) To *conquer* is to take control of.
- **gullible** (adjective) *Gullible* means easily tricked or persuaded.

- ▶ Who was Pandora?
- ▶ Explain how the modern expression *Trojan horse* is related to the myth.
- ▶ Choose one of the expressions. Illustrate a situation in which you might use that expression.
- ▶ The Greek myths about King Midas, Pandora, and the Trojan horse all involved a gift. How are these gifts similar?
- ▶ Today we use *Midas touch* to describe a person who is lucky. Was the ancient Greek story really about good luck? Why or why not?
- ▶ Imagine you are making a movie about someone who opens a *Pandora's box*. Write about or discuss your movie.