

Document Camera

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Plan for the following prompt.

**Write an informative essay to present to your class about alligators.  
Use information from the passages in your essay.**

I \_\_\_\_\_

T1 \_\_\_\_\_

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

T2 \_\_\_\_\_

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

T3 \_\_\_\_\_

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_



## Alligators at Risk



**1** There are two species of known alligators in the world, the American alligator and the Chinese alligator. The American alligator can be found in the wetlands of the southern United States. These reptiles have been hunted for many years and, at one point, were close to extinction. In order to protect this species, they were listed under the Endangered Species Act, making hunting alligators illegal. Due to the efforts of the Endangered Species Act, the species has made a huge recovery and was taken off the endangered species list in 1987. Since the American alligator population has repopulated so well, hunting and egg collecting is once again allowed.

**2** On the other hand, the Chinese alligator is a class one endangered species. The Chinese alligator can be found in the subtropical regions of China in low-lying areas such as rivers, streams, and marshes. This species of alligator is classified as critically endangered because it has a decline in population greater than 80% in specific areas of population. The destruction of their habitats comes largely from the conversion of the lands they inhabit being used for agricultural purposes. The Chinese alligator is very similar to the American alligator in appearance, but they are much smaller.



## What Are Reptiles?

**3** Snakes, turtles, and lizards are reptiles. These animals are cold-blooded; this means their body temperature depends on their environment and their skin is covered with hard scales that serve as protection for the animal. They have to keep warm by laying in the sun. Since they do not burn too much energy to keep warm, they do not have to eat as much food as mammals or other warm-blooded animals.

**4** Most reptiles lay eggs. Alligators tend to create nests from nearby vegetation to keep their eggs safe. The decomposing vegetation creates the heat needed to keep the eggs incubated. The sex of the baby alligators is determined by the temperature of the nest. If the nest is cooler, it will produce a clutch of female hatchlings, and if the temperature is above 93 degrees Fahrenheit, the eggs will produce male hatchlings.

<b>American Alligator</b>	<b>Chinese Alligator</b>
<p>An average adult American alligator's weight and length is 790 pounds and 13.1 feet</p> <p>The largest ever recorded, found in Louisiana, measured 19.2 feet</p> <p>Adult alligators are black or dark olive-brown with white undersides</p>	<p>Rarely exceeds 6.9 feet in length and usually weighs less than 100 pounds</p> <p>The body is fully armored, even under its belly</p>

*"Alligators at Risk" written for educational purposes.*



## Alligator Habitats

**5** American alligators can be found in freshwater environments like rivers, lakes, ponds, swamps, and marshes. They also like to live in areas that are brackish, which means the water is slightly higher in salt content than fresh water, but not salty like sea water. Alligators tend to stay in marshy areas during the breeding season. The wetlands make nest building much easier for the alligators and keep the temperatures of the nests ideal for incubating their eggs.



**6** Adult American alligators create holes in their swamp habitats. They construct these alligator holes by using their feet, tail, and snout. These holes create areas that help the alligator stay cool during hot weather. Alligator holes also provide habitats for other animals during droughts.



**7** Other animals found in these types of habitats are amphibians, shellfish, bears, and panthers. The types of animals found in these habitats depends on whether the swamp is a freshwater swamp or a saltwater swamp. These animals make this their home since they are able to live in low-oxygenated, slow-moving waters.

**8** Many species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish live and do well in swamp ecosystems. These swamp areas are important because many fish and amphibians lay their eggs in the nearby dry areas. When the eggs hatch, the young crawl into the water.



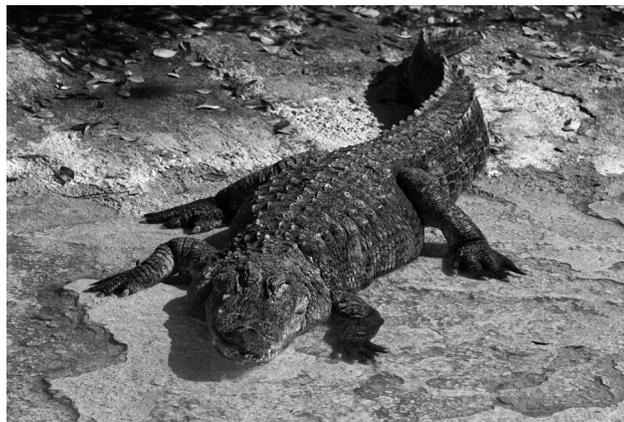
## Types of Reptiles Found in the Everglades

**9** The Everglades National Park in Florida is a freshwater swamp and is home to hundreds of types of birds, many species of reptiles, the Florida black bear, and the Florida panther. Both the American crocodile and the American alligator coexist in the Everglades swamp. Florida weather makes this an ideal habitat for the alligator, as well as many other animals.

**10 Turtles:** The most common turtles found in a swamp-like habitat are the striped mud turtle commonly found along trails, the Peninsula Cooter often found in shark valley, and the Florida red-belly found in freshwater marshes.

**11 Snakes:** Most of the snakes found in the Everglades National Park are adapted to living in water. The striped crayfish snake is the best swimming snake in Florida, but

is not easy to spot since they spend their time in marsh plants. The brown water snake is seen often in plain view and sometimes mistaken for the poisonous Florida cottonmouth.



### **12 Amphibians:**

Amphibians are animals that spend the early part of their life in water using gills to breathe. They grow into adults that may live in water but use lungs for breathing. These include frogs, toads, and salamanders. Most

commonly seen in the Florida Everglades is the grass frog which is the tiniest frog in North America, the pig frog whose grunt-like call can be heard day or night, and the dwarf siren salamander.

**13** All of these reptiles have an important role to play in the habitat they live in.

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