

Name: _____ Period: _____

Predators: KWL

AS YOU READ the article, highlight **ONLY** information that confirms or refutes the statements we thought were true about predators or information that answers the “What I want to know” questions.

AFTER YOU READ, do the following in the section indicated:

Put a check mark in the box next to any confirmed statements.

Draw a line through any statements that were shown to be incorrect.

Write a “?” next to any remaining statements.

Compose an “*I used to think...*” statement at the bottom. *Use complete sentences and cite the ¶# as your evidence.*

} Include the ¶#
for verification.



Why are Predators important?

¶1 Predators are an important part of a healthy ecosystem. Predators remove vulnerable prey, such as the old, injured, sick, or very young, leaving more food for the survival and success of healthy prey animals. Also, by controlling the size of prey populations, predators help slow down the spread of disease. Predators will catch healthy prey when they can, but catching sick or injured animals helps in the formation of healthier prey populations because only the fittest animals survive and are able to reproduce.

¶2 In addition, predators help to reduce the negative impacts that their prey may have on the ecosystem if they become too abundant or if they stayed in one area for too long. When predators like cheetahs prey on grazing animals like antelope, it keeps the prey population moving around (in fear) and prevents overgrazing in any one area. As a result, more trees, shrubs, bushes, and grasses can grow, which then provides habitat for many other species.

If carnivores were removed from an ecosystem, what would happen?



¶3 Herds of grazing animals, such as antelope, would grow and grow. Only bad weather such as a drought, or disease such as rabies, would slow down the herd growth. As a result, large herds would overgraze their food source, and as the food disappeared, the whole herd would begin to starve.



¶4 While human hunters can sometimes replace predators in the control of antelope populations, they generally do not remove the injured, sick, or older animals. Thus, cheetahs and other predators play an important role in maintaining healthy prey populations.

¶5 The cheetah is a valuable member of its community. In addition to its role as a predator, cheetahs feed other animals, such as vultures, jackals, beetles, and other scavengers. After a cheetah kills an animal it usually begins eating at the hind quarters, which provide the greatest amount of meat. Because the cheetah is not an aggressive carnivore, larger predators, as well as jackals and vultures, can scare the cheetah off its kill. By leaving the remains of a carcass, the cheetah feeds other animals in the ecosystem.

¶6 Many people fear predators, especially big cats such as the lion, cheetah, and leopard. We are often taught to fear carnivores without understanding their unique behaviors, special adaptations, and essential roles in the maintenance of healthy ecosystems. Wouldn't a world without predators be something to fear even more?

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Absent Students: The 6 statements in the “ALREADY KNOW” section were brainstormed by your class. Follow the directions on the other sheet to complete this activity.

Why Predators Are Important

What we think we **ALREADY KNOW** or have heard about why predators are important:

1. Predators keep the prey population from getting too large.

2. They usually kill weak or diseased animals.

3. Predators are often killed by humans.

4. Predators help prevent the prey population from eating all the resources (ex: grass/food).

5. Ecosystems may have more than one predator.

6. Predators help the prey population become healthier.

What we **WANT** to know:

1. How do humans impact predator and prey populations?

2. How do predators impact animals that are NOT their prey

Compose an “*I used to think...but now I know...because*” statement below. Cite information from the article as your evidence.