

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Read the passages and answer the questions that follow.**

## Passage 1

### The Selkie

- 1 Long ago, a fisherman lived with his two small boys. They lived alone on a small island and fished the surrounding waters. Each day, the lonely fisherman spent long hours alone in his boat. Often, he could see seals appear in the distance, for these creatures lived in the sea near his home.
- 2 One day, the fisherman sensed that someone was watching him, and he was astonished to spy a woman bobbing nearby in the water. He began speaking sweetly to her and, after some time, she climbed into the boat. Almost instantly, the two fell in love and, before long, they married.
- 3 As the months passed, the fisherman's two boys came to adore their new mother, and she came to love them. Yet, even during their most joyful moments, their mother would look longingly to the sea. Its voice was like a magnet, always calling her, and she longed to respond.
- 4 As the years passed, the boys slowly came to understand their mother's need for the watery world near them.
- 5 One day, they guided her to a place beyond the barn where a suit of dark gray sealskin had lain hidden like a forbidden treasure for many years. The boys knew their father must have found it on the rocks near the shore long ago when he first met their mother. Now, with hearts full of joy as well as sorrow, they steered her to it. She shouted with delight and put on the skin.
- 6 Instantly, she was transformed into a selkie, a creature half human and half seal. With mournful eyes, she hugged the boys and then returned to the sea. In tears, they watched the selkie swim away and disappear into the waters of her natural home.
- 7 When their father returned that evening, he knew what had happened. He was sad but also proud of his boys for the choice they had made. For the rest of their lives, they would all remember the heavenly days they had spent with the selkie from the sea.

GO ON

## Passage 2

# Myths of the Orkney Islands

*Stories about selkies come from a place called the Orkney Islands in the North Atlantic Ocean. In this interview, a reporter talks with an expert on Orkney Island myths.*

- 1     **Reporter:** Tell us a little about the geography of the Orkney Islands, where tales of the selkies seem to have originated.
  
- 2     **Expert:** Well, there are about seventy islands, and they are north of Scotland and not so far from Greenland. Many are desolate places with very few, or no inhabitants. But they're quite scenic. They have rocky cliffs, sandy beaches, and the sea all around.
  
- 3     **Reporter:** Are there a lot of fishermen?
  
- 4     **Expert:** For generations, Orkney Islanders traditionally made their living from the sea. Many fishermen went out in boats every day from their small island homes. Some also farmed and kept animals. Today, some Orkney Islanders are fishermen, but not nearly as many as in the past.
  
- 5     **Reporter:** Why would the Orkney Islanders contrive stories about creatures who are half human and half seal?
  
- 6     **Expert:** Well, there are lots of seals in the waters around the islands, and the climate is probably an influence, too. Although some days are sunny, the weather is often misty, cloudy, and foggy. It can be gloomy and even a bit creepy. In fact, fog is so ubiquitous that the local people have a special word for it, *haar*. Anyway, imagine that it's a foggy day and you're looking out to sea. In the distance you see the head of a seal in the water, and through the fog it resembles a human. Maybe you've been lonely a long time, or out to sea for days, and you're longing for companionship. Maybe that has an effect on you, too.
  
- 7     **Reporter:** Are the Orkney Islanders the only people who made up stories of creatures that were part human?



- 8     **Expert:** Oh, no, the Greeks, Egyptians, and many others did the same. For example, the Greeks told stories of the centaur, a creature that was half human and half horse. Some Greek myths told of the minotaur, which was half human and half bull. Many cultures tell stories to this day about mermaids, which are part woman and part fish, similar to selkies.
- 9     **Reporter:** How do you think the islanders first began to tell stories about selkies?
- 10    **Expert:** In every culture, people have a basic urge to tell stories. So, long ago, people in the Orkney Islands probably gathered together around a fire and sang and told stories. Back then, people lacked a great deal of scientific knowledge, so stories tended to have magical elements to them to explain how things happened. The people probably took a creature they recognized and a place they knew, seals and the sea, and then added a little magic and a little imagination.



1. In Passage 1, how is the selkie different from the father in the passage?
  - A. She spends hours in a boat.
  - B. She is only half human.
  - C. She grows to love the two boys.
  - D. She wants children of her own.

2. Read this sentence from paragraph 3 of "The Selkie."

"Its voice was like a magnet, always calling her, and she longed to respond."

What does the simile like a magnet mean as it is used in this sentence?

- A. The selkie heard voices in her head.
  - B. The sea wanted to punish the selkie for leaving.
  - C. The selkie wanted to sing with the sea.
  - D. The sea had great power over the selkie.
3. Read this sentence from paragraph 5 of "The Selkie."

"One day, they guided her to a place beyond the barn where a suit of dark gray sealskin had lain hidden like a forbidden treasure for many years."

What does the simile like a forbidden treasure suggest about the suit in this sentence?

- A. It is dirty and worn from the effects of the weather.
  - B. The fisherman had buried the suit behind the barn.
  - C. It had great value but was supposed to stay hidden.
  - D. It is the skin of a seal and must be returned to the sea.
4. In Passage 1, how were the two boys different from their father?
    - A. They encouraged their mother to return to the sea.
    - B. They did not think the woman was their mother.
    - C. They never grew to love their new mother.
    - D. They were lonely and did not like living next to the sea.



5. What does the word transformed mean as it is used in paragraph 6 of Passage 1?
- A. delivered
  - B. changed
  - C. plunged
  - D. guided
6. In Passage 2, what evidence does the Expert give to support the idea that the Orkney Islanders were closely connected to the sea?
- A. "Although some days are sunny, the weather is often misty, cloudy, and foggy."
  - B. "Many fishermen went out in boats every day from their small island homes."
  - C. "Oh, no, the Greeks, Egyptians, and many others did the same."
  - D. "So, long ago, people in the Orkney Islands probably gathered together around a fire and sang and told stories."
7. In Passage 2, what does the word traditionally mean as it is used in paragraph 4?
- A. for good reasons
  - B. in a clever way
  - C. with great care or skill
  - D. by custom or habit
8. In Passage 2, what evidence **best** supports the Expert's claim that the climate of the Orkney Islands often made it hard to view things clearly at sea? Underline **one** sentence.

"It can be gloomy and even a bit creepy. In fact, fog is so ubiquitous that the local people have a special word for it, *haar*. Anyway, imagine that it's a foggy day and you're looking out to sea. In the distance you see the head of a seal in the water, and through the fog it resembles a human. Maybe you've been lonely a long time, or out to sea for days, and you're longing for companionship. Maybe that has an effect on you, too."



9. Based on these two passages, why did people make up selkies and tell stories about them? Select **two** answers.
- A. Some fishermen got lonely and wanted to see other humans.
  - B. Many fishermen went out to sea every day.
  - C. Sometimes seals in the water looked like humans.
  - D. Some fathers needed help taking care of their children.
  - E. No one in the Orkney Islands had scientific knowledge.

