

Name _____

Date _____

The Night Zoo's Secret Dice Maker

Read the story carefully. Then answer the questions.

At the Night Zoo, Elliana and Ari found a sign that read SECRET DICE MAKER AT WORK. Below it sat a tray of small brown cubes. "An animal makes dice?" Ari asked. Elliana searched for a tiny workshop. She expected a squirrel with a saw or a beaver holding a ruler.

A zoo educator named Dr. Wattle pointed to a furry animal shaped like a small barrel. It was a bare-nosed wombat named Bixby. He shuffled out of his burrow, sniffed a rock, and left one new brown cube on top. Ari leaned closer. "That is not a die," he said. "That is poop wearing a square costume!"

Dr. Wattle explained that wombats are the only known animals that naturally produce cube-shaped droppings. The cubes are not stamped by a square opening. In fact, a wombat's opening is round. The shape forms earlier, inside the final part of its long intestine. Bare-nosed wombats are burrowing, plant-eating marsupials native to Australia.

Some parts of that intestine are stiffer than others. As the intestine squeezes and the waste becomes drier, those uneven sections help press flat sides and corners into it. Scientists found that the cubes form in the last part of the digestive trip. They are really closer to short rectangular blocks than perfect toy cubes.

Why would a wombat leave blocks on a rock? Wombats use scent-filled droppings to communicate and mark places they have visited. Scientists have proposed that flat-sided droppings may be less likely to roll away from rocks or logs. Dr. Wattle called each pile a wombat message board. Ari decided the message probably said, "This rock is taken. Please sniff elsewhere."

Bixby climbed onto another low rock. Elliana whispered, "The factory is moving to a new office." Bixby sniffed, turned around, and sat down without producing anything. Ari nodded seriously. "The dice maker is on a break."

Before leaving, the twins wrote the real mystery in their notebooks: a soft, round animal can make a shape with corners because of the way its intestine stretches and squeezes. The secret dice maker had no tools, no ruler, and definitely no game night planned.

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Circle the best answer.

Questions 1-10

1. What is the main idea of the story?

- A. The twins learn how wombats make and use unusual droppings.
- B. The twins teach a wombat to play a board game.
- C. Dr. Wattle builds a factory inside the zoo.
- D. Bixby searches for a missing ruler.

6. In the story, "proposed" most nearly means -

- A. suggested as a possible explanation.
- B. measured with perfect certainty.
- C. hidden from every scientist.
- D. changed into a different shape.

2. What did the twins first expect to find?

- A. An animal making real dice
- B. A wombat digging a deep tunnel
- C. A scientist measuring a rock
- D. A squirrel hiding its dinner

7. Why might flat sides be useful to a wombat?

- A. They may keep droppings from rolling away.
- B. They help wombats swim across rivers.
- C. They turn rocks into square blocks.
- D. They make the droppings smell like flowers.

3. What did Bixby leave on the rock?

- A. A wooden toy
- B. A brown, cube-shaped dropping
- C. A ruler from the workshop
- D. A message written on paper

8. Which word best describes the twins?

- A. Curious
- B. Angry
- C. Dishonest
- D. Careless

4. Where does the cube shape form?

- A. Inside the final part of the intestine
- B. On the rock after the dropping lands
- C. Inside a square opening
- D. Under the wombat's front paws

9. Which event happened last?

- A. The twins searched for a tiny workshop.
- B. Bixby left a brown cube on a rock.
- C. The twins wrote the real mystery in their notebooks.
- D. Dr. Wattle explained how the intestine works.

5. What helps press corners into the droppings?

- A. Unevenly stiff sections of the intestine
- B. Bixby's sharp front claws
- C. The hard surface of the rock
- D. A hidden machine in the burrow

10. What is the author's main purpose?

- A. To entertain readers while sharing surprising wombat facts
- B. To persuade readers to keep wombats as pets
- C. To explain the rules of a dice game
- D. To prove that every animal visits rocks

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Lesson 9 Answers

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1. A

6. A

2. A

7. A

3. B

8. A

4. A

9. C

5. A

10. A