

## READING

Read the following passage about people helping animals. Then answer questions 1–9 in your answer booklet.

# Seals Healed Here

by F.C. Nicholson

The baby seals wriggle across the smooth white floor, their dark eyes as big as half-dollars. Their cries—somewhere between a dog’s bark and a kitten’s meow—say, “Feed me!”

It’s almost lunchtime for these babies. Most of them are very sick, or used to be. Thanks to Greg Early and his staff at the New England Aquarium’s marine mammal care center, they’re on their way to recovery. The center is a hospital for sick and injured seals, dolphins, and whales. This part, the room where the baby seals are, is like a hospital nursery.

“We try to take Mom’s place as best we can,” explains Greg. The babies, called pups, are orphans. In spring, when harbor seals give birth, some newborn seals are left to survive on their own. Sometimes a storm at sea will sweep the pups from their mothers’ sides. Some become sick with diseases like pneumonia or parasites. Others may be poor swimmers whose mothers must leave them behind.

The orphaned pups turn up on beaches all along the New England coast. People who find them call Greg at the center, in Boston.

A seal on shore doesn’t always mean trouble. “Sometimes, the mother is around,” Greg explains. “And sometimes the babies haul out onto the beach to keep warm. After all,

when you spend too long in the water, you turn blue and start to shiver. So do the little seals, because they haven’t got that thick layer of blubber that keeps the adults warm.”

The best thing to do is watch the seal from a distance and make sure it isn’t disturbed until someone who can handle wild animals arrives. “Your brain can be the most helpful part of your body,” Greg says.

When baby seals come to the nursery, they get a thorough checkup from the aquarium’s vet, who sets up a medical care and feeding program. Harbor seal pups weigh twenty-five pounds when they’re born. The ones that come to the nursery range from twenty-two pounds down to twelve—about the same as a house cat.

Each seal gets an identification tag—a red plastic circle with a number on it. The tag is stuck to the hair on top of the pup’s head with waterproof rubber cement. The tag will come off when the seal sheds its hair. The tags are needed because at the nursery’s busiest times there are thirty or forty pups on the floor, and they look alike with their mottled gray colors.

Besides vitamins and medicines, the pups get artificial seal’s milk. A mixture of powdered cottage cheese, vegetable oils, and heavy cream, it looks like pancake batter and smells like sour cream. And how does it taste? “Well, it’s not

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good, but it's not bad either," says Greg with a grin. Pups won't get the nutrients they need from ordinary milk. Also, cow's milk contains sugar, which seals can't digest.

Feeding all the pups may take a couple of hours. When mealtime's over, the pups doze under heat lamps or swim in the pool that's built into the nursery's floor.

As they get older and stronger, the pups switch from formula to fish. In a special pool, they learn to chase small fish. Until they understand that fish are food, the pups chase them and pin them against the pool's walls with their whiskery snouts. Once a pup learns to eat the fish it catches, Greg knows it will be able to take care of itself in the wild.

Despite all the care, some never recover fully, and they might stay at the aquarium to join its harbor seal exhibit, or move to other aquariums or zoos. But most are returned to the sea.

"The whole reason for us picking them up is to release them back into the wild," says Greg. And at the end of every season, when the last seal has returned to the ocean and the nursery is empty again, the aquarium staff has a party with big bowls of ice cream—made with heavy cream from the old seal formula!

### A.2.4.1

1. What is one important idea of this passage?
  - A An aquarium offers many important jobs.
  - \* B Some animals need human help to stay alive.
  - C People should stay away from animals in the wild.
  - D Wild animals and people can learn to live together.

### B.2.1.2

2. Why does the author compare the seals' eyes to half-dollars in the first sentence?
  - A to explain how the eyes move
  - B to suggest that the seals are afraid
  - \* C to show the size of the seals' eyes
  - D to describe the silver color of the eyes

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### B.3.1.1

3. Which sentence from the passage contains an opinion?
- \* A “Your brain can be the most helpful part of your body.”
  - B “And sometimes the babies haul out onto the beach to keep warm.”
  - C “The whole reason for us picking them up is to release them back into the wild.”
  - D “After all, when you spend too long in the water, you turn blue and start to shiver.”

### A.2.4.1

4. The main idea of the first paragraph is to
- A describe how the seal pups get fed.
  - B suggest that the seal pups can speak.
  - \* C show how helpless the seal pups are.
  - D explain why the seal pups are so hungry.

### A.2.4.1

5. After a baby seal gets a check-up, it
- \* A receives a special tag.
  - B learns how to chase fish.
  - C swims in the nursery pool.
  - D takes a nap under a heat lamp.

### A.2.6.1

6. The author probably wrote this passage to
- A describe the daily life of harbor seals.
  - B encourage readers to save baby seals.
  - \* C explain how an aquarium cares for baby seals.
  - D tell how aquarium workers learn to care for seals.

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### A.2.4.1

7. Why should the seals **not** drink cow's milk?
- A It is too thick.
  - \* B It contains sugar.
  - C It has a bad taste.
  - D It has few vitamins.

### A.2.3.1

8. Based on information in the passage, what is the **best** action to take if a person finds a seal pup alone on the beach?
- A Feed the animal some fish.
  - B Try to find the seal's mother.
  - C Pick up the seal and move it to safety.
  - \* D Call someone who handles wild animals.

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### A.2.5.1

9. In your own words, summarize what happens when baby seals first arrive at the nursery. Use at least three examples from the passage to support your response.
