



Wild Ponies of Assateague Island Printable Reading Comprehension

Grade Level: 4 | Word Count: 220 | Lexile 800

Assateague Island is a narrow barrier island that stretches along the coast of Maryland and Virginia. It is famous for its wild ponies, which have roamed the island for hundreds of years. No one knows for certain how these ponies arrived, but there are two popular theories. One theory suggests that the ponies are descendants of horses that survived a Spanish shipwreck long ago. Another idea is that early settlers brought the horses to graze on the island.

Life on Assateague Island is harsh for the ponies. The sandy soil supports only sparse grasses, and fresh water is limited. As a result, the ponies have adapted by eating salty plants and drinking from small ponds. They have shorter, stockier bodies compared to typical horses, which helps them survive the tough conditions.

Every summer, an exciting event called the Pony Swim takes place. Volunteers herd the ponies across a narrow channel from Assateague Island to nearby Chincoteague Island. There, many foals are auctioned to raise money for the local fire department and to control the pony population. This tradition attracts thousands of visitors each year, eager to watch the powerful animals swim through the water.

1. What is the main reason for the Pony Swim event?

- A. To train ponies for racing
 - B. To help raise money and manage the herd size
 - C. To keep the ponies healthy during summer
 - D. To celebrate the arrival of Spanish explorers
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2. Which of the following BEST explains why the ponies look different from regular horses?

- A. They are mixed with other wild animals
- B. They adapted to the island's challenging environment
- C. They were bred for special shows
- D. They receive special care from humans

3. What can you infer about life on Assateague Island for ponies?

- A. It is easy because the island has plenty of food and water
 - B. It is harsh, so ponies have developed special ways to survive
 - C. It is pleasant because the ponies have no predators
 - D. It is dangerous only during the Pony Swim event
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4. Which detail from the text supports the idea that people care about the ponies?

- A. Ponies eat salty plants and drink from ponds
 - B. The Pony Swim tradition attracts thousands of visitors
 - C. Foals are sold to support the fire department and control population
 - D. No one knows how the ponies arrived on the island
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5. Which sentence states the MAIN IDEA of the passage?

- A. Assateague Island is famous for its wild ponies, which have a unique history and an important annual event.
- B. Ponies on Assateague Island have short, stocky bodies to survive the conditions.
- C. The Pony Swim is the most popular event on the East Coast.
- D. Spanish explorers lost their horses in a shipwreck near Assateague Island.

Answers

1. **B** – To help raise money and manage the herd size
2. **B** – They adapted to the island's challenging environment
3. **B** – It is harsh, so ponies have developed special ways to survive
4. **C** – Foals are sold to support the fire department and control population
5. **A** – Assateague Island is famous for its wild ponies, which have a unique history and an important annual event