



Name: _____ Date: _____

READING SCIENCE

Inherited Traits and Learned Behaviors

Lexile 790L

1 Has anyone ever told you that you look like your mom or dad? Or have you ever seen a puppy or kitten that looks just like its mother? **Offspring** look like their parents because living things pass certain traits to their children. However, animals are not stuck with the traits with which they were born. They also have the ability to learn.



2 Take dogs, for example. There are many different kinds of dogs in the world, and each kind has its own traits.

3 Dachshunds are long and skinny with short legs. They are built this way so they can easily hunt inside tunnels for badgers. If two dachshunds have puppies, the babies will also be long and skinny with short legs. When a trait is passed from parent to child, we say it is **inherited**.

4 Behaviors can also be inherited. For example, most dachshunds are curious and love to explore their environments. They like to be with other dogs of their breed, or kind. These behaviors pass from parents to offspring. Different types of dogs are known for different behaviors. Some types of dogs are great at herding other animals, such as cattle or sheep. Some dogs like to dig. Still other dogs are very brave and loyal and are good at being protective.

5 Animals can also learn; however, and their behaviors can change to meet the demands of the environment in better ways. If animals could not learn, it would be harder for them to survive changes in their environments. One example of an animal that didn't learn fast enough is the dodo bird. Dodos evolved on an island where they had few predators. When humans arrived, the dodos did not know to fear people. Because they did not learn to avoid predators, they became extinct.

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- 6 Luckily, most animals learn how to change with their environments. Sometimes, animals learn *not* to do something if it causes a negative consequence. That is the reason that invisible fences work to keep dogs contained. An invisible fence is a wire under the ground that sends out a radio signal. The dog wears a collar and gets a small shock if it tries to pass the wire. The shock does not hurt the dog, but it is startling. The dog learns to stay in the yard, even though the wire cannot be seen. When something negative (like a shock) happens to an animal, the animal learns not to repeat an action. This is called **punishment**.
- 7 Animals can also learn from **rewards**, or positive things that happen. Many people give treats to dogs when they want to teach them tricks.
- 8 Dogs can learn to sit, stay, and even get the newspaper! You might learn from rewards, too. If your teacher gives you a sticker when you do a good job, you will learn to try your hardest at school. The sticker is an example of a reward.
- 9 Each animal - and person - is a mixture of inherited traits and learned behaviors. Remember this if you ever want to teach an old dog new tricks!

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1 The word **offspring** (paragraph 1) means:

- A** A season
- B** An inherited trait
- C** A child
- D** A parent

2 Which of the following is an inherited trait?

- A** The color of your eyes
- B** Reading
- C** The style of your clothes
- D** Your haircut

3 Complete the following analogy:

Reward is to punishment, as positive is to_____.

- A** Trait
- B** Inherited
- C** Learned
- D** Negative

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- 4 The main idea of this passage is *Animals have both inherited traits and learned behaviors*.

Which detail from the text best supports this idea?

- A Dachshunds have long, skinny bodies.
 - B Dogs can look like their parents. They can also learn to stay inside an invisible fence.
 - C Rewards and punishments help animals learn.
 - D The dodo died out because it did not learn to fear predators.
- 5 The author probably wrote this passage to...
- A Describe the inherited traits of dogs
 - B Tell a story about a dachshund
 - C Explain how animals get their traits and behaviors
 - D Persuade the reader to train dogs