

# Who Would Win? Alligator vs. Python

by Jerry Pallotta

**Who Would Win?: Alligator vs. Python is an exciting look at two of nature’s deadliest creatures! Learn amazing facts about each animal, and then decide who YOU think would win in a fierce fight between the two.**

## Create Successful Reading Habits

Academic language is a critical component of vocabulary development, oral language, and developing a student’s ability to read, think, speak, and write about a topic. By guiding students to develop their academic language skills, teachers can mitigate some of the challenges that students encounter when learning to comprehend text.\* Students should engage in a variety of activities that purposefully support the development of their academic language. Inferential language instruction can be helpful when learning about figurative language because it supports a student’s ability to think critically, make inferences, connect ideas, and determine the deeper meaning of the text.

\* U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, What Works Clearinghouse. (n.d.). Practice Guides. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuides>

## SCIENCE OF READING – PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENTS

Assessing students is critical for identifying specific literacy needs. There should always be a purpose for assessments. The **four main purposes for assessments are:**

1. **Screening** helps to identify who is at risk for not meeting grade-level learning goals.
  - usually administered in the fall, winter, and spring of a school year to identify students at risk for reading and spelling difficulties
2. **Progress Monitoring** determines if the intervention is fixing the problem.
  - administered frequently to check for adequate student growth
  - used to determine instructional needs and to make instructional decisions
3. **Diagnostic** assessments assist in identifying specific needs and what should be taught.
  - measure students’ proficiency in reading skills
  - used to design effective instructional interventions
  - can be informal, criterion-referenced, or norm-referenced
4. **Outcome Measure** assessments help to determine if students are meeting expected levels of performance.
  - can be criterion- or norm-referenced
    - **Norm-referenced** assessments measure a student’s performance in comparison to the performance of same-age students on the same assessment and are designed to document gains in performance. The FAST Assessment is an example of a norm-referenced assessment.
    - **Criterion-referenced** assessments measure what a student knows and does not know at the time, and the results are compared to grade-level standards. An end-of-unit test is an example of a criterion-referenced assessment.

Assessment data, combined with other relevant information, are used to determine the most efficient and effective way to increase student outcomes. Assessment data can be used to plan instruction, determine the composition of small groups, and evaluate progress.

## WORD WORK – SYLLABLE PATTERNS

Students will practice **segmenting** syllables in words.

Words are divided into syllables using **syllable patterns**. Students can use **syllable patterns** to help them decode unfamiliar words when reading.

This book uses a variety of Tier 2 and Tier 3 multisyllabic vocabulary words. Practice **syllable segmenting** with words in the text to help students read more fluently and increase comprehension of this complex text.

### Model:

- Say to students, “Today, we are going to practice **segmenting** multisyllabic words into syllables.”
- Display the word *movable* on the board.
- Say, “The word is *movable*.” Ask students to repeat the word.
- Say, “When I **segment** a word into its syllables, I think about how to pronounce each part, and I blend the parts together to read the word. We are going to practice **segmenting** the word *movable* into its syllables.”
- Say the word *mov - a - ble* out loud while placing emphasis on each syllable. Write *mov - a - ble* on the board with hyphens.
- Model reading each syllable by pointing your finger under it as you read. Then slide your finger under the word as you read it blended together.

### Guided Practice:

- Write another multisyllabic word from the text on the board.
- Ask students to **segment** the word, using hyphens, on their papers.
- Students will then turn and talk to a partner to share how they **segment** the word.
- Review the **syllable segmentation pattern** with the whole class, and allow students to check their understanding.

While reading, continue to identify multisyllabic words that students can practice **segmenting** into syllables. Continue to follow the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework throughout the book.

**ELA.4.F.1.3: Use knowledge of grade-level phonics and word-analysis skills to decode words.**

- a. Apply knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology to read and write unfamiliar single-syllable and multisyllabic words in and out of context.**

### ELL and SWD suggestion:

Students who need additional practice identifying syllable boundaries can benefit from clapping syllables and saying a written word aloud while clapping for each syllable. Repeating this process can help students gain more confidence in identifying **syllable segments**.

## TALK ABOUT NEW AND INTERESTING WORDS

Tier 2 vocabulary words can be used for explicit vocabulary instruction. When teaching vocabulary, it is important to create and share student-friendly definitions that are appropriate for the level of your students. Help students make connections to the word by providing contextual information that relates to the text being read and builds upon their background knowledge. Here are some examples of Tier 2 vocabulary words from the book:



**tolerate** (p. 8): If you **tolerate** something, you put up with it, even if you do not like it. Alligators **tolerate** salt water, but they would prefer to live in freshwater.



**flexible** (p. 13): Something that is **flexible** can bend easily. Pythons do not chew food. Instead, they wiggle their **flexible** jaw to get whole pieces of food down their throat.



**disguised** (p. 18): If you **disguise** yourself, you hide or change your appearance so that you cannot be seen by others. Alligators hide all of their body, except for their eyes and nose, under the water to **disguise** themselves from humans and other animals.



**rugged** (p. 25): If something is **rugged**, it is strong and tough. Pythons have skin that feels smooth and **rugged**. How do you think it would feel to touch the **rugged** skin of a snake?

**ELA.4.V.1.1: Use grade-level academic vocabulary appropriately in speaking and writing.**

### ELL and SWD suggestion:

Cloze sentences are sentences where key vocabulary is deleted, and students must use context clues to determine the missing word. This best practice brings students' attention to a specific word in a sentence and helps them to understand how language works. Cloze sentences require students to monitor for meaning while reading and to think critically about a text. This is an engaging activity that can be used to reinforce the learning of Tier 2 vocabulary words. When using cloze sentences, you can choose to provide a word bank depending on the needs of the students.

Example: The American alligator is the \_\_\_\_\_ reptile in North America.

# READ FOR MEANING – SUPPORTING CLAIMS WITH EVIDENCE AND REASONING

ELA.4.R.2.4: Explain an author’s claim and the reasons and evidence used to support the claim.

## Before: Building Background

- **Brainstorm:** Provide students with the opportunity to think about what they know about the topic of **alligators** and **pythons**. Brainstorming is one way that teachers can help students activate their prior knowledge and allow them to share what they know with others.
  - Divide students into groups of two to three.
  - Give students five to eight minutes to brainstorm everything they know about alligators and pythons. Each group will share what they know. Invite students to add to each group’s thinking.

## During:

- In this book, the author states that the American alligator and the Burmese python are among some of the deadliest creatures alive. The author claims that the Burmese python would win in a battle against the American alligator and provides evidence and reasoning to support their claim. The following definitions are from the glossary provided within the B.E.S.T. Standards:
  - **Claim:** a statement that something is true or is a fact, although other people might not believe it
  - **Evidence:** source-based information, including facts, figures, and details used to support the writer’s claim
  - **Reasoning:** the process of thinking about something in a logical way in order to form a conclusion or judgment (“how” or “why” the evidence supports the claim)
- Use the graphic organizer provided to help students determine if they agree or disagree with the author’s claim.
- Use the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework to model thinking, provide guided practice, and allow for independent application.

**CLAIM:** The author claims the Burmese python would win a battle over the American alligator.

As you are reading about the American alligator and the Burmese python, collect evidence on each animal’s characteristics. Compare the evidence collected to determine if the evidence is credible, accurate, and reliable. After reading, you will use the collected evidence to determine if you agree with the author’s claim.

| American alligator | Advantage                | Characteristics | Advantage                | Burmese python |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|----------------|
|                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Size            | <input type="checkbox"/> |                |
|                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Teeth or Fangs  | <input type="checkbox"/> |                |
|                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Camouflage      | <input type="checkbox"/> |                |
|                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Eyesight        | <input type="checkbox"/> |                |
|                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tactics         | <input type="checkbox"/> |                |
|                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Speed           | <input type="checkbox"/> |                |
|                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | Skin            | <input type="checkbox"/> |                |

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### After:

- Students will determine which animal has the advantage for each characteristic and check the appropriate advantage box.
- Students will use the chart to determine which evidence most strongly supports that a Burmese python will defeat an American alligator.
- Students will discuss the evidence with partners and evaluate if it supports the author's claim. Students will then decide if they agree or disagree with the author's claim.
- **Extension Activity:** The author provides one way the fight might have ended. Students will write their own endings.

### ELL and SWD suggestion:

Support students in identifying evidence and reasons by using a color-code system. Provide students with a printed version of the text, and ask them to highlight evidence in one color (yellow) and reasons in another color (green). Using a color-code can help students visualize the difference between the two concepts.