



## ***Lighthouse Keepers!***

***A bit o' Learnin'...***

### ***Gadgets and Wisdom!***

In *The Animal Lighthouse* story, the old orangutan, Oskar, is a very clever engineer. He's the one who fixed the lighthouse bulbs to create special beams – especially beam three-and-a-half – that hide the island from unwanted visitors, using optical illusions. Although orangutans can't speak in real life, they are the most **intelligent apes** on the planet. And the most like us.

Orangutans learn to use tools, talk to one another using different calls that mean things like “where's my mum” and “I'm up here in this tree”. And, like us, they can recognise themselves in a mirror.



It's not surprising, then, that humans have very similar DNA – which is the microscopic building blocks of life that make up who we are – to orangutans. In fact, **96.4% of human DNA** is the same as an orangutan!



### ***Island Animals!***

In real-life, as in *The Animal Lighthouse*, orangutans only live on islands. They used to roam across China and Southeast Asia but are now, sadly, a **critically endangered** species because humans have cut down so many rainforests where they live.

The two islands of Borneo and Sumatra, which are near one another off the coast of Malaysia, are where the three types of orangutans left in the wild live. The three types are:

- Sumatran Orangutan – only 14,600 left in the wild
- Tapanuli Orangutan – only 800 left in the wild
- Bornean Orangutan – only 46,000 left in the wild

The scientific name for orangutans is **Pongo**, but this has nothing to do with how they smell!



### ***Try this!***

Using a world map or globe, find where the Borneo and Sumatra islands are...and work out how many miles they are from where you live.

### **Licking Rocks and Foraging Fruit!**



As orangutans spend 80% of the day up in trees, they mostly eat fruit they find on branches. Their favourite fruit are figs, but they also eat lots of leaves, honey, bark, termites and birds' eggs.

The other thing they do is to find certain **rocks and lick them**. This sounds strange, but they do it because clay minerals, like Kaolin, help settle their stomach after lots of food.

You'll understand why if you've ever eaten *way too much* fruit, because it can often lead to lots of **farts, burps and a bad stomach!**

### **What is a Great Ape?**

Orangutans are Great Apes, which means they are part of a small family of animals the most similar to humans. Called **hominids**, the family includes gorillas, chimpanzees, gibbons, orangutans and humans.



Like us, male and female orangutans look very different to one another.

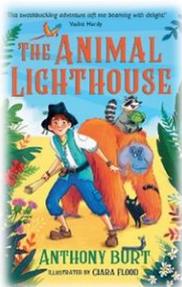
The males are usually much larger, weighing 75kg compared to females, that are just 37kg.

Orangutan arms **grow as long as 2 metres** and males usually grow beards and have what are called "flanges" on the sides of their faces. These are fatty lumps. The bigger they are, the more dominant an orangutan is amongst all the males in that area of the forest.

As this orangutan skeleton shows, their heads are bigger than ours and they have tiny "opposable thumbs" that make their hands stronger at gripping tree branches.

### **Fact or Fiction?**

In *The Animal Lighthouse* the orangutan, Oskar, is skilled at inventing gadgets and he is the head of the island family of animals. This means he's wise, clever and very sociable.



In real-life, most orangutans live quite solitary lives, especially the males. Dominant males have a defined area which they stay inside, their territory, and if any young orangutan (under the age of 11) strays into that territory fights can break out.



Female orangutans live in closer groups, especially with their new babies. And, even when females grow up, they stay near their mothers whereas males head farther away to make new territories. As Oskar is the only orangutan on Lighthouse Island, and one who is an older, "dominant male", this is very true to real-life behaviour of orangutans in the wild.



### **Try this!**

As orangutans are endangered, lots of conservation charities try to save the rainforests and help the apes survive. Find an orangutan charity and, as a class, draw up a visual plan of ways you could help save orangutans from extinction.