

Notes

Skim Before you begin, predict what the passage will be about. Use clues like the title, subheads, and words in *italics* or **bold**.

Look Look here for details on why the Chinese like pandas.

Use the Notes column to take notes and use SALSA™ strategies. There are a few hints to get you started.

Giant Pandas

It is important to save giant pandas. They are special animals. Sadly, not many are left in China, where they come from. The Chinese try to protect them because they are in danger of disappearing. There may be as few as 1,600 left. Our country tries to help, too. Zookeepers here study giant pandas. They tell scientists in China what they learn.

Giant pandas are important to the Chinese. The Chinese call them by another name, *Xiongmao*. It means “Giant Cat Bear.” The Chinese once thought giant pandas brought good luck. Chinese rulers kept them as pets. There are writings about giant pandas from 3,000 years ago.

What They Look Like

Giant pandas are black and white. Many people think they look like huge, cuddly teddy bears. Their thick, wooly coats keep them warm in the cool forests of China. Giant pandas grow four to six feet long. Males are larger than females. They weigh up to 250 pounds. Females usually weigh less than 220 pounds.

Where You Can See Them

If you are lucky enough to see giant pandas, you will understand why the Chinese love them. Most likely, you will only see them in a zoo. These fine animals normally live far away. They live in forests in the misty, rainy mountains of China.

There are some giant pandas in the United States. They are all on loan from China. They are at the San Diego Zoo in California, the Memphis Zoo in Tennessee, and Zoo Atlanta in Georgia. They are also at the National Zoo in Washington, DC.

A Giant Panda Family

The giant pandas at the National Zoo arrived in 2000. **Mei Xiang** is a female. She was born in 1998. **Tian Tian** is a male. He was born in 1997.

Ask Why does the author sound out the names of the pandas?

The name Mei Xiang (pronounced may-SHONG) means “beautiful fragrance.” Tian Tian (t-YEN t-YEN) means “more and more.”

Notes

Mei Xiang is shy. It takes her a while to get used to new things. Tian Tian isn't so shy. Mei Xiang is smaller than Tian Tian. But she doesn't hesitate to steal his food. She just grabs it from him.

Until 2007, a third panda lives at the National Zoo. Mei Xiang had a baby in July 2005. The zoo held a vote to name him. More than 200,000 people voted. The winning name was **Tai Shan** (tie-'SHON). It means "peaceful mountain." When he turns two years old, he will leave the zoo to live in China.

The three giant pandas live in a large enclosed area. They are very comfortable. They have misty air and a cave where they can sleep. Most important, they have lots of **bamboo** to eat. Bamboo is a fast-growing woody grass. It is not very nutritious. The shoots and leaves are the best parts. So pandas must eat a lot of it. They spend 12 hours a day eating.



Giant panda at the National Zoo
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Solve Why do pandas spend 12 hours a day eating? *Read Again* if you are not sure.

Saving the Pandas

Learning more about the giant pandas will help save them. For example, animal doctors in China need to know how to care for sick or injured pandas. Our zookeepers can help.

All kinds of life on Earth are important. But giant pandas also stand for something. To the Chinese, they are a symbol of their country and its long history. To people around the world, they are a symbol of the fight to keep our wildlife from disappearing.

Assemble How would you summarize the passage?