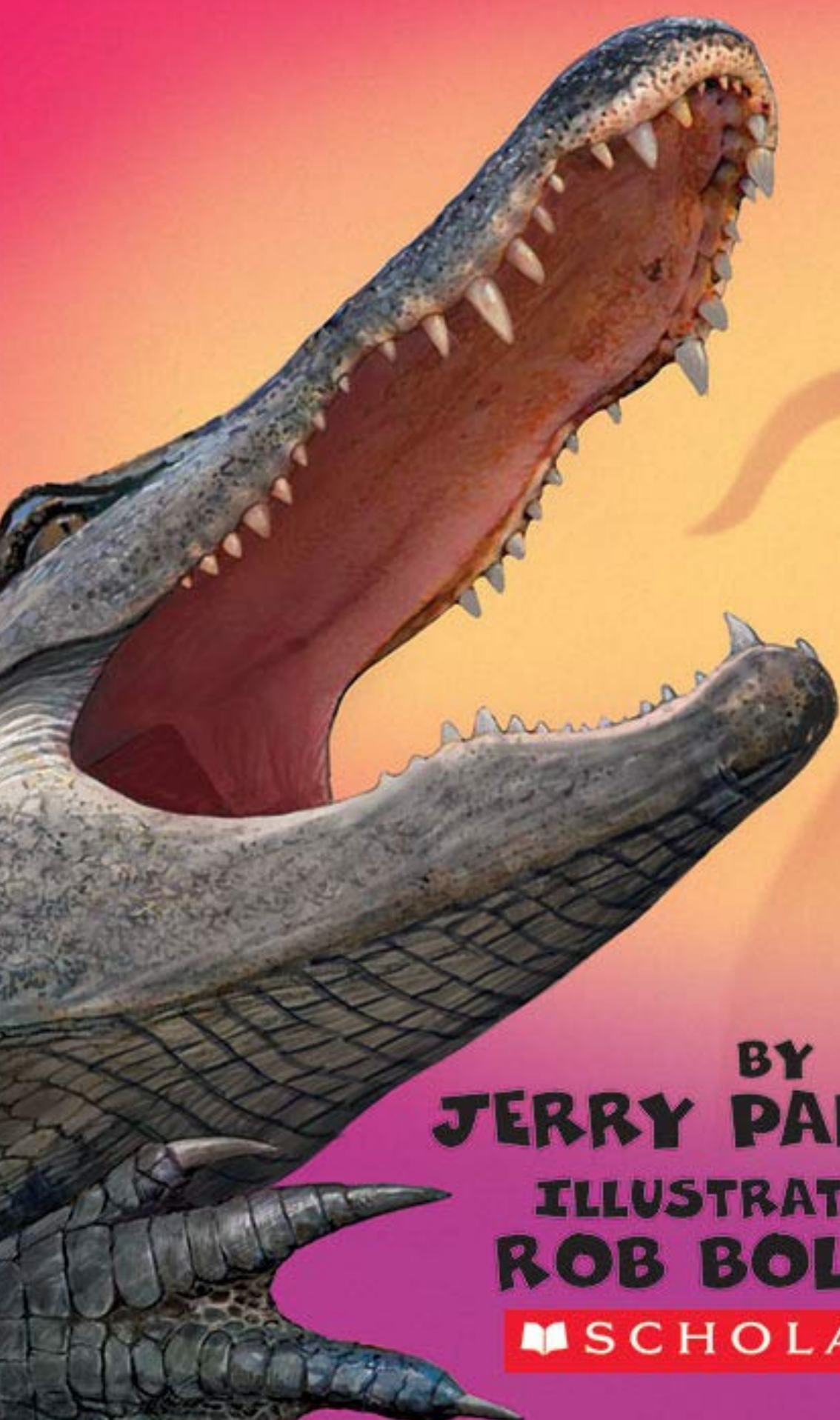


— WHO — WOULD WIN?

**ALLIGATOR VS.
PYTHON**



BY
JERRY PALLOTTA

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROB BOLSTER



SCHOLASTIC

MEET THE ALLIGATOR

This is an American alligator. It can weigh up to 1,000 pounds. Scientific name: *Alligator mississippiensis*. These creatures live from Texas to North Carolina.

FACT
Alligators are reptiles.

DEFINITION
Reptiles are cold-blooded animals that have dry scales. Snakes, crocodiles, lizards, and turtles are also reptiles.

BIG FACT
The American alligator is the largest reptile in North America.

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MEET THE PYTHON

This is a Burmese python. Scientific name: *Python bivittatus*. The Burmese python can grow up to 19 feet long. People have seen them swallow a deer, a cat, and a pig. Yikes!

FACT
Pythons are snakes.
Snakes are reptiles.

FANG FACT
Pythons are not venomous.
They have no poison.

ANCIENT FACT
Dinosaurs were also reptiles.

127

TEETH

Alligators have a huge, strong jaw full of big teeth. They have about 80 teeth, which are powerful weapons.

FACT
An alligator's jaw has the bite strength equal to 2,000 pounds per square inch. No human can lift 2,000 pounds. That's a ton!

TEETH TYPE

A dentist would say that alligators have conical-shaped teeth. Their teeth are shaped like an ice cream cone.

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FANGS AND TEETH

Snakes don't chew their food. They have teeth designed to hold dinner. Slowly their strong, flexible jaws wiggle the food into their mouths, and they swallow it whole.

GOOFY QUESTION

Would you like to replace your teeth with a mouthful of fangs?

FANG TYPE

Snake fangs are shaped like curved knives.

Yikes! Burmese python teeth are sharp fangs that face inward. It is hard for an animal to escape the bite of a Burmese python.

135

ROLL- A GREAT TACTIC!

When an alligator gets hold of an animal, it rolls. This twists the animal and often breaks its arms or legs. An alligator is so strong, it can roll and rip its prey's limb off.



The roll is an amazing move. How do alligators learn it? We can only wonder.

NOT A FUN FACT

Yes, alligators have eaten a few people.

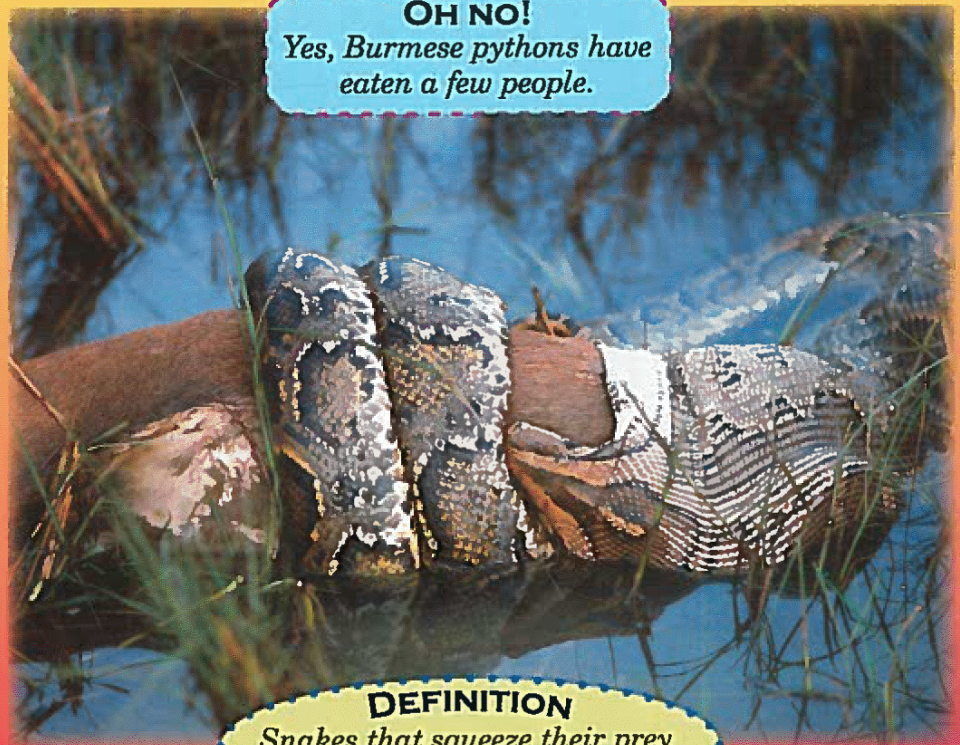
MIDNIGHT SNACK?

Alligators don't always eat the whole animal they catch. They often bury it and eat the rest later.

136

ENCIRCLE AND SQUEEZE, A DEADLY TECHNIQUE

Burmese pythons kill their prey by encircling them and squeezing them. They squeeze until the animal can't breathe.



OH NO!

Yes, Burmese pythons have eaten a few people.

DEFINITION

Snakes that squeeze their prey are called constrictors.

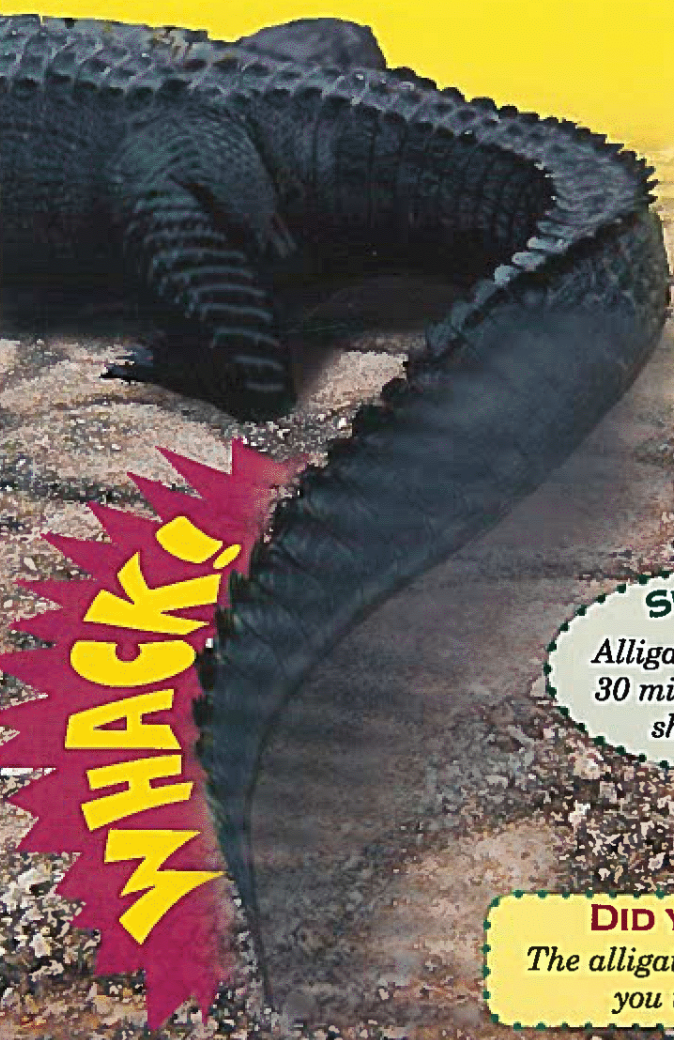
WARNING

Don't ever let someone put a python around your neck or on your shoulders.

137

ALLIGATOR TAIL

The alligator has a long, thick tail. The tail is almost as long as the rest of its body. It uses the tail to steer and swim.



SPEED FACT

Alligators can only run 30 miles per hour for a short distance.

DID YOU KNOW?

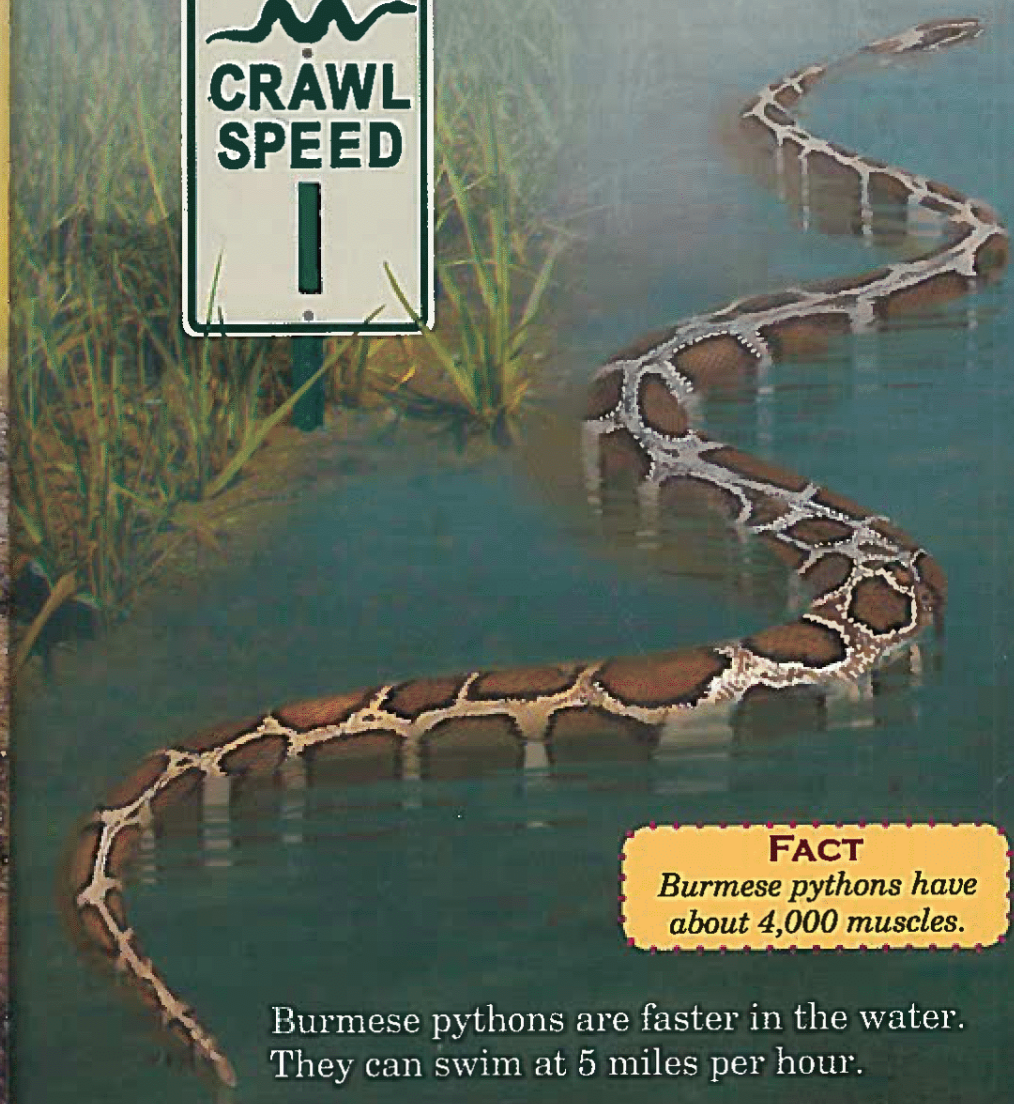
The alligator can also smack you with its tail.

Alligators are excellent swimmers. They can swim at 10 miles per hour.

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DO SNAKES HAVE TAILS?

Not really. Its whole body is just shaped like a tail. Pythons are also excellent swimmers.



FACT

Burmese pythons have about 4,000 muscles.

Burmese pythons are faster in the water. They can swim at 5 miles per hour.

139

HIDDEN

Can you find the alligator? He is well disguised in this swamp. The alligator patiently waits with his nose and eyes above water.

FACT

Alligators cannot breathe underwater.

DID YOU KNOW?

Underwater, alligators close their nose and ears.

BONUS FACT

Usually an alligator holds its breath underwater for about 15 minutes.

Alligators have been known to hold their breath for up to an hour. In cold water, an alligator can hold its breath even longer.

QUESTION

Can alligators climb trees?

140

CAMOUFLAGED

The Burmese python is also well disguised. It looks like leaves on the ground.

DID YOU KNOW?

The python also holds its eyes and nose above water.

LUNG FACT

A Burmese python can hold its breath underwater for at least a half hour.

Beware! Burmese pythons can climb trees.

THANK GOODNESS!

Alligators can't climb trees.

141

FOOD

Alligators eat insects, snails, fish, turtles, and other reptiles when they are young. As an alligator gets older, they eat larger creatures. A young alligator might get eaten by a big fish, hawk, or eagle. Hatchlings, watch out!

DEFINITION

A baby alligator is called a hatchling. Hatchlings eat insects and shrimp.

OLD

A grown-up alligator often goes out of the water to grab a huge mammal like a dog, a cow, or a horse.

FACT

Alligators are good at sneaking up on birds. They have been known to eat a duck, a goose, or an egret.

142

LET'S EAT

A Burmese python eats anything it can swallow whole. A python can unhinge its jaw, stretch its ligaments, and swallow something bigger than its mouth, usually small mammals, frogs, and birds.

FACT

A python can taste, smell, and tell the temperature with its tongue.

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I SEE YOU

Alligators have excellent eyesight.



FEET

Alligators have strong legs, tough ugly feet, and long nails. They are great at digging holes to bury uneaten food, or dig pools of water.

Four toes



**REAR
FOOT**

Five toes



**FRONT
FOOT**

I SENSE YOU

Python brains see a visual world and a thermal world.



DID YOU KNOW?

Pythons have heat sensors in their mouths. They can “see” your heat.

DEFINITION

Thermal means heat.

NO FEET

Snakes don't have feet. Snakes slither along the ground on their wide belly scales.



python belly scales

BOTTOM VIEW

WHO HAS THE ADVANTAGE?

ALLIGATOR

PYTHON

☐

Size

☐☐

Teeth or Fangs

☐☐

Camouflage

☐☐

Eyesight

☐☐

Speed

☐☐

Tactics

☐