

## An Odyssey Story Animal Senses



Odyssey, the blue-furred otter with his trademark cool sunglasses, was excited for a new day of exploration in the Jocassee Gorges. As he emerged from his cozy den near the crystal-clear waters of Lake Jocassee, he took a moment to observe the world around him.

"Wow!" Odyssey exclaimed. "There's so much to see, hear, and smell in these gorgeous gorges!"

He watched as a red-tailed hawk soared overhead, its keen eyes scanning the ground for prey. Odyssey knew that, like his own eyes, the hawk's eyes allowed light to enter and reflect off objects, creating images that helped it navigate and hunt.

As Odyssey swam along the shoreline, he noticed a group of students on a pontoon boat. Their guide was explaining how animals in the gorges use their senses to survive.

"Just like Odyssey the otter uses his whiskers to feel vibrations in the water," the guide said, "a snake uses its forked tongue to smell the air and locate prey."

Odyssey nodded in agreement. He knew his whiskers, or vibrissae, were vital for sensing his surroundings underwater where visibility was poor.

Suddenly, Odyssey's sensitive ears picked up a faint rustling in the underbrush. He turned to see a white-tailed deer cautiously approaching the water's edge. The deer's large ears swiveled like satellite dishes, alert for any signs of danger. "Those big ears sure help the deer stay safe," Odyssey thought. "They can hear predators coming from far away!"

As he continued his swim, Odyssey came across a beaver busily constructing its lodge. The beaver's strong, chisel-like teeth were perfect for gnawing through wood, while its flat, scaly tail served multiple purposes - as a rudder for swimming, a prop for standing upright, and even a way to signal danger by slapping the water.

Odyssey marveled at how each animal's body parts worked together as a system. His own streamlined body, webbed feet, and water-repellent fur all helped him swim efficiently and stay warm in the cool mountain waters.

Near a small cove, Odyssey spotted a group of salamanders. These amphibians were masters of adaptation, equally at home in water and on land. Their moist, permeable skin allowed them to breathe both in and out of water - a super-power Odyssey found fascinating.

As the day went on, Odyssey observed more animals using their unique adaptations:

- A great blue heron stood motionless in the shallows, its sharp eyes and long beak perfectly suited for spotting and spearing fish.
- A raccoon used its sensitive paws to feel for crayfish under rocks in a stream.
- A black bear sniffed the air with its powerful nose, able to smell food from over a mile away.

At sunset, Odyssey returned to his den, reflecting on all he had seen. He realized that every animal in the Jocassee Gorges, including himself, had special internal and external structures that worked together to help them survive and thrive in this beautiful but challenging environment.

As he drifted off to sleep, Odyssey smiled, knowing that tomorrow would bring new adventures and more chances to use his own super otter senses to explore the wonders of Jocassee Gorges.