

# polar bear vs hippo

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The comparison between a polar bear and a hippopotamus is a fascinating exploration of two of the most formidable and intriguing large mammals on Earth. Despite both being large, powerful animals, they inhabit vastly different environments, possess unique adaptations, and exhibit contrasting behaviors and physical characteristics. Understanding these differences provides insight into their evolutionary paths, survival strategies, and roles within their respective ecosystems. This article delves into the origins, physical attributes, habitats, behaviors, diets, predators, and conservation status of both the polar bear and the hippopotamus, offering a comprehensive comparison of these two remarkable creatures.

## Origins and Evolutionary Backgrounds

### Polar Bear

- Scientific Name: *Ursus maritimus*
- Evolution: The polar bear evolved approximately 400,000 years ago from a common ancestor shared with brown bears (*Ursus arctos*).
- Adaptations: Over millennia, they adapted to the Arctic environment, developing thick insulating fur, a dense fat layer, and large paws for walking on ice and swimming.
- Habitat Shift: Their evolution was driven by the retreat of ice sheets following the last Ice Age, leading them to become specialized marine predators.

### Hippopotamus

- Scientific Name: *Hippopotamus amphibius*
- Evolution: The hippopotamus is believed to have diverged from their ancient ancestors around 2 to 4 million years ago.
- Evolutionary Links: They are closely related to cetaceans (whales, dolphins), sharing a common semi-aquatic ancestor.
- Adaptations: Their semi-aquatic lifestyle is reflected in their body structure, such as webbed feet and a barrel-shaped torso.

## Physical Characteristics and Size Comparison

## **Polar Bear**

- Average Weight: 350–700 pounds (160–320 kg) for females; males can weigh between 900–1,600 pounds (410–720 kg).
- Length: 7.9–9.8 feet (2.4–3 meters) from nose to tail.
- Distinct Features:
  - Thick white fur that provides insulation and camouflage.
  - Large paws (up to 12 inches in diameter) for traction on ice and swimming.
  - Sharp claws and powerful limbs for hunting seals.
- Special Adaptations: A keen sense of smell (up to 1 mile away), excellent swimming ability, and a thick layer of fat up to 4.5 inches thick.

## **Hippopotamus**

- Average Weight: 3,300–4,000 pounds (1,500–1,800 kg), with males generally larger than females.
- Length: 10 to 16.5 feet (3 to 5 meters).
- Distinct Features:
  - Massive barrel-shaped body.
  - Short legs with webbed feet.
  - Large mouth with prominent tusks.
  - Nearly hairless skin, usually gray to brownish.
- Special Adaptations: Eyes, ears, and nostrils positioned high on the head for breathing and observing while mostly submerged.

## **Habitat and Geographic Range**

### **Polar Bear**

- Primary Habitat: Arctic sea ice and surrounding coastal regions.
- Geographic Range: Circles the Arctic, including parts of Canada, Greenland, Norway (Svalbard), Russia, and Alaska.
- Environment: Cold, icy waters with seasonal sea ice coverage.
- Adaptations: Dependence on sea ice for hunting seals, their primary prey.

### **Hippopotamus**

- Primary Habitat: Rivers, lakes, and swamps in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Geographic Range: Countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa, and others.
- Environment: Warm, freshwater bodies with abundant aquatic vegetation.
- Adaptations: Spend most of their time submerged to keep cool and avoid sunburn.

# Behavioral Traits and Social Structures

## Polar Bear

- Solitary Nature: Mainly solitary except during mating season or mother with cubs.
- Hunting Strategy: Ambush seals at breathing holes or hunt on ice edges.
- Activity Pattern: Most active during dawn and dusk; can be seen resting for long periods.
- Reproductive Behavior: Females give birth to 1–3 cubs after a gestation of about 8 months; cubs rely heavily on maternal care.

## Hippopotamus

- Social Structure: Live in groups called pods, usually comprising 10–30 individuals.
- Daily Behavior:
  - Spend up to 16 hours submerged during the day.
  - Grazing at night on grasses.
- Territorial Behavior: Males establish territories in water bodies, marking them with dung and vocalizations.
- Reproductive Behavior: Mating occurs in water, with females giving birth to a single calf after about 8 months.

# Diet and Feeding Habits

## Polar Bear

- Carnivorous Diet: Primarily feeds on seals (ringed and bearded seals).
- Hunting Techniques:
  - Waits by breathing holes or breaks into seal dens.
  - Uses powerful limbs and claws to catch prey.
- Diet Variability: Occasionally eats fish, birds, or scavenges carcasses.

## Hippopotamus

- Herbivorous Diet: Feeds mainly on grasses.
- Feeding Habits:
  - Grazes at night on grasses, consuming up to 150 pounds (70 kg) in a single night.
  - Can also feed on aquatic vegetation.
- Foraging Range: Usually stays within a range of 1–2 miles from water.

# Predators and Threats

## Polar Bear

- Natural Predators: No significant predators for healthy adults.
- Threats:
  - Climate change leading to melting sea ice, reducing hunting grounds.
  - Human-related threats like oil exploration and poaching.
  - Cubs vulnerable to predators like wolves and polar bears themselves.

## Hippopotamus

- Natural Predators:
  - Lions, crocodiles, and hyenas may prey on calves.
- Adult hippos generally have few predators due to their size and aggression.
- Threats:
  - Poaching for ivory (tusks) and meat.
  - Habitat loss from human encroachment and water pollution.

# Conservation Status and Challenges

## Polar Bear

- IUCN Status: Vulnerable.
- Major Challenges:
  - Melting ice caps due to global warming.
  - Human-wildlife conflicts.
  - Illegal poaching and climate-induced habitat loss.
- Conservation Efforts:
  - International agreements like the Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears.
  - Research and monitoring projects.
  - Protected areas and climate change mitigation.

## Hippopotamus

- IUCN Status: Vulnerable.
- Major Challenges:
  - Overhunting for ivory and skins.

- Habitat destruction from agriculture and water diversion.
- Water pollution affecting health.
- Conservation Measures:
- Protected areas and national parks.
- Anti-poaching laws.
- Community-based conservation programs.

## Comparison Summary

- **Habitat:** Polar bears thrive in cold Arctic environments, while hippos are confined to warm freshwater habitats in Africa.
- **Physical Adaptations:** Polar bears have thick fur and a thick layer of fat for insulation; hippos have nearly hairless skin and high-positioned eyes and nostrils for aquatic life.
- **Diet:** Polar bears are carnivores primarily hunting seals; hippos are herbivores grazing on grasses.
- **Behavior:** Polar bears are solitary and specialized hunters; hippos are social animals living in groups with territorial behaviors.
- **Threats:** Climate change is the biggest threat to polar bears; poaching and habitat loss threaten hippos.

## Conclusion

The polar bear and hippopotamus exemplify the incredible diversity of mammalian life, each adapted to their unique environments and ecological niches. The polar bear, a symbol of Arctic resilience, faces existential threats from climate change, emphasizing the importance of global environmental efforts. Conversely, the hippopotamus, a dominant presence in African freshwater ecosystems, struggles against human-induced habitat destruction and poaching. Comparing these two animals underscores the importance of conservation initiatives tailored to their specific needs. Their survival hinges on addressing the challenges posed by changing climates and human activities, ensuring that future generations can continue to marvel at the strength, adaptability, and beauty of these extraordinary creatures.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How do the sizes of polar bears and hippos compare?

Hippos are significantly larger than polar bears, with adult hippos weighing between 3,000 to 4,000 pounds, while adult male polar bears typically weigh around 900 pounds.

## Are polar bears and hippos ever found in the same habitats?

No, polar bears inhabit Arctic regions, primarily around the North Pole, whereas hippos are native to sub-Saharan Africa's freshwater rivers and lakes, so their habitats do not overlap.

## Could a polar bear pose a threat to a hippo if they ever encountered each other?

In their natural habitats, they never meet, but if they did, a polar bear might attempt to attack a young or vulnerable hippo, but a healthy adult hippo would likely be too large and powerful to threaten.

## Which animal is more dangerous to humans: polar bears or hippos?

Hippos are considered one of the most dangerous animals in Africa due to their aggressive nature and territorial behavior, while polar bears are also dangerous, especially if encountered unexpectedly, but hippos generally cause more human fatalities.

## What are the primary diets of polar bears and hippos?

Polar bears are carnivorous, mainly feeding on seals, while hippos are herbivores that primarily graze on grasses and aquatic plants.

## Can polar bears swim efficiently, and do hippos do the same?

Yes, polar bears are excellent swimmers, capable of swimming long distances in icy waters, whereas hippos are semi-aquatic animals that spend much of their time submerged but are not known for long-distance swimming.

## What adaptations help polar bears survive in cold Arctic environments compared to hippos?

Polar bears have thick blubber, dense fur, and large paws for insulation and movement on ice, while hippos have thick skin and spend most of their time in water to stay cool in hot climates.

# Are there any conservation concerns related to polar bears and hippos?

Yes, polar bears are threatened by climate change and melting sea ice, while hippos face threats from habitat loss and poaching for their ivory and meat in parts of Africa.

## Additional Resources

### Polar Bear vs Hippo: An In-Depth Comparative Analysis of Two Remarkable Giants

When contemplating the animal kingdom's most formidable creatures, few comparisons evoke as much intrigue as that between the polar bear and the hippopotamus. These two behemoths, though vastly different in their habitats, physical adaptations, and behaviors, both command awe and respect within their respective ecosystems. Polar bear vs hippo—this matchup underscores the diversity and specialization that evolution has wrought across different environments. In this article, we delve into the biology, ecology, behavior, and conservation status of these giants, offering a comprehensive perspective that illuminates their unique worlds.

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### Physical Characteristics and Adaptations

#### The Polar Bear: The Arctic's Apex Predator

##### Size and Build:

Adult male polar bears typically measure between 8 to 10 feet in length when standing upright and can weigh between 900 to 1,600 pounds. Females are smaller, averaging around 5 to 7 feet and weighing 330 to 700 pounds. Their massive size is a crucial adaptation for thermoregulation and hunting.

##### Fur and Fat:

Polar bears possess a thick, dense coat of white fur that provides camouflage in snow and ice, as well as insulation. Beneath the fur, a thick layer of subcutaneous fat—up to 4.5 inches—is vital for insulation against Arctic cold, as well as serving as an energy reserve during fasting periods.

##### Paws and Claws:

Their large paws (up to 12 inches across) function as snowshoes, distributing their weight and preventing them from sinking into the snow. The paws are also equipped with sharp claws (about 2 inches long) for traction and catching prey.

##### Sensory Abilities:

Polar bears have an excellent sense of smell, capable of detecting seals nearly a mile away and beneath several feet of compacted snow and ice. This acute olfaction is essential for hunting in the vast, icy wilderness.

## The Hippopotamus: The River's Heavyweight

### Size and Build:

Adult male hippos, known as bulls, measure about 10 to 16 feet in length and weigh between 3,000 and 4,000 pounds, with females slightly smaller. Their massive, barrel-shaped bodies are supported by relatively short legs.

### Skin and Adaptations:

Hippos have thick, nearly hairless skin that is grayish or brownish, with a smooth appearance. Their skin secretes a natural, sunscreen-like substance that protects against sunburn and infection, reflecting their semi-aquatic lifestyle.

### Teeth and Jaw Power:

Possessing enormous tusk-like incisors that can grow up to 20 inches, hippos are formidable biters. Their powerful jaws can open to 150 degrees, enabling them to bite with a force estimated at around 1,800 pounds per square inch—one of the strongest bites in the animal kingdom.

### Buoyancy and Movement:

Despite their bulk, hippos are surprisingly agile in water, capable of running on the riverbed and jumping short distances. Their webbed feet aid in swimming, and they are capable of staying submerged for several minutes.

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## Habitats and Geographic Distribution

### Polar Bears: Masters of the Arctic

Polar bears are exclusively found within the Arctic Circle, encompassing regions of Canada, Greenland, Norway (Svalbard), Russia, and the United States (Alaska). Their habitat is characterized by sea ice, which they depend on for hunting seals—their primary prey.

### Habitat Specifics:

- Sea Ice: The foundation of their habitat, providing access to seals and other marine mammals.
- Ice-Free Periods: During summer, melting reduces ice cover, forcing bears to adapt by fasting or wandering to find food.

### Range Dynamics:

Climate change has led to significant reductions in sea ice extent, forcing polar bears to travel greater distances and impacting their survival and reproductive success.

## Hippos: Champions of Freshwater Ecosystems



Hippos are predominantly found in sub-Saharan Africa, inhabiting rivers, lakes, and swamps across countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, and South Africa.

#### Habitat Specifics:

- Freshwater Bodies: They prefer shallow waters where they can submerge to regulate body temperature.
- Terrestrial Range: While they spend most of their time in water, they venture onto land at night to graze on grasses.

#### Range Dynamics:

Habitat loss due to human encroachment, agriculture, and water pollution poses threats to hippo populations, although they are currently listed as vulnerable but relatively abundant compared to other megafauna.

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#### Behavior and Diet

##### The Polar Bear: The Arctic Predator

#### Hunting Strategies:

Polar bears primarily rely on a carnivorous diet, with seals constituting the bulk of their intake. They are excellent swimmers and can cover vast distances in search of prey, patiently waiting by breathing holes in the ice.

#### Hunting Methods:

- Stalking and Ambush: Bears often wait silently near seal breathing holes, ambushing seals as they surface.
- Active Pursuit: In some cases, bears chase seals across the ice or break into seal dens.

#### Behavioral Traits:

- Solitary Lifestyle: Adult polar bears tend to be solitary, except during mating season or when a mother is with her cubs.
- Territoriality: Males establish and defend territories to attract mates.

##### The Hippopotamus: The Semi-Aquatic Herbivore

#### Diet and Feeding:

Hippos are primarily herbivores, grazing on grasses during the night for 3 to 5 hours and consuming up to 150 pounds of vegetation daily.

#### Behavioral Traits:

- Social Structure: Hippos live in groups called pods, which can include a dominant male, several females, and their offspring.
- Territorial Behavior: Males are territorial in water, defending specific sections of a river or lake, often

engaging in aggressive displays and fights.

#### Communication:

Hippos are known for their vocalizations, including grunts, bellows, and honks, which serve to communicate within the pod and establish dominance.

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#### Predators and Threats

##### Predators of Polar Bears:

While polar bears are apex predators in their environment, they face threats from:

- Humans: Poaching, illegal hunting, and climate change-driven habitat loss.
- Environmental Changes: Melting sea ice reduces hunting grounds, leading to nutritional stress.

##### Predators and Threats of Hippos:

Hippos have few natural predators due to their size; however, they are occasionally threatened by:

- Lions and Crocodiles: Juvenile hippos or calves may fall prey to large predators.
- Humans: Poaching for ivory tusks and meat; habitat destruction from agriculture and urbanization.

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#### Conservation Status and Challenges

##### Polar Bears:

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) classifies polar bears as vulnerable, primarily due to climate change. The rapid reduction of sea ice is a significant threat, impacting their ability to hunt and reproduce.

##### Conservation Efforts Include:

- Protecting critical habitats.
- Climate change mitigation initiatives.
- International treaties and regulations against illegal hunting.

##### Hippos:

The IUCN lists hippos as vulnerable, facing risks from habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict. Despite their abundance, they are increasingly threatened by illegal ivory and meat trade.

##### Conservation Efforts Include:

- Anti-poaching measures.
- Habitat preservation programs.

- Community-based conservation initiatives.

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### Comparing the Giants: A Summary

|             |                                              |                                                 |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Aspect      | Polar Bear                                   | Hippopotamus                                    |
| -----       | -----                                        | -----                                           |
| Habitat     | Arctic sea ice and coastal regions           | Freshwater rivers, lakes, and swamps in Africa  |
| Size        | Up to 10 feet, 1,600 pounds                  | Up to 16 feet, 4,000 pounds                     |
| Diet        | Seals and marine mammals                     | Grasses and aquatic vegetation                  |
| Behavior    | Solitary, stalking seals                     | Social, group-living, herbivorous               |
| Adaptations | Thick fur, fat insulation, excellent swimmer | Thick skin, large teeth, semi-aquatic lifestyle |
| Threats     | Climate change, habitat loss, poaching       | Habitat loss, poaching, human conflict          |

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### Final Thoughts: A Tale of Two Giants

The polar bear and hippopotamus embody the incredible adaptability of life on Earth, each thriving within vastly different ecological niches. The polar bear's survival hinges on the fragile Arctic ice, a symbol of the impacts of global warming, while the hippopotamus's fate is intertwined with the health of freshwater ecosystems and human activity in Africa.

Despite their differences, both species face mounting threats from environmental changes and human activity. Their stories underscore the urgent need for conservation efforts tailored to their unique needs. Protecting these animals is not just about saving individual species; it's about preserving the intricate web of life that sustains our planet's biodiversity.

In understanding the polar bear vs hippo, we appreciate the diversity of life, the importance of habitat preservation, and the responsibility we bear to ensure that these remarkable creatures continue to roam and thrive for generations to come.

## [Polar Bear Vs Hippo](#)

**polar bear vs hippo: Hippo vs. Polar Bear** Janey Levy, 2018-07-15 Hippos and polar bears are both fairly large mammals that spend much of their time in water, but is that where their similarities end? Readers of this captivating book will find out the answer to that and many more questions as they imagine these two beasts battling it out. Colorful photographs and a dynamic page layout assist with the understanding of key elementary science concepts. After reading all the facts, readers can judge this epic battle themselves and determine which animal they think would come out on top.

**polar bear vs hippo: Rhino vs. Hippo (Who Would Win?)** Jerry Pallotta, 2020-10-06 What if

a rhino and a hippo had a fight? Who do you think would win? This nonfiction reader compares and contrasts two ferocious animals. Readers will learn about each animal's anatomy, behavior, and more. Then compare and contrast the battling pair before finally discovering the winner! This nonfiction series is full of facts, photos, and realistic illustrations, and it includes a range of mammals, sea creatures, insects, and dinosaurs to satisfy all kinds of animal fans.

**polar bear vs hippo:** Komodo Dragon vs. King Cobra Jerry Pallotta, 2023-08-01 Find out what would happen if a Komodo dragon and a king cobra got in a fight and who would win. Aligned to Common Core Standards and correlated to state standards. Beginning Readers is an imprint of Spotlight, a division of ABDO.

**polar bear vs hippo:** *Life Sciences* Amy Bain, Janet Richer, Janet Weckman, 2001-05-15 Everything you need to create exciting thematic science units can be found in these handy guides. Developed for educators who want to take an integrated approach, these teaching kits contain resource lists, reading selections, and activities that can be easily pulled together for units on virtually any science topic. Arranged by subject, each book lists key scientific concepts for primary, intermediate, and upper level learners and links them to specific chapters where resources for teaching those concepts appear. Chapters identify and describe comprehensive teaching resources (nonfiction) and related fiction reading selections, then detail hands-on science and extension activities that help students learn the scientific method and build learning across the curriculum. A final section helps you locate helpful experiment books and appropriate journals, Web sites, agencies, and related organizations.

**polar bear vs hippo:** Jamboree Activity Guide B Jackie Holderness, Neil Griffiths, 2005

**polar bear vs hippo:** 1000 Wonders of Nature , 2002 Delve below the Earth, soar beyond the heavens and scour every corner of the planet to discover wonders far greater in number than the world's Big Seven -- and just as astounding. A riveting read for weird science buffs of all ages and an ideal way for parents and kids to share the thrills of learning, 1000 Wonders of Nature spotlights incredible animals, formidable forces of weather and mysterious occurrences -- and clearly explains the facts of science behind them all. Filled with 1,300 up-close and astounding full-color photos of the most intriguing living creatures and impressive natural spectacles. Chapters highlight: -- Nature's Great Events, from the self-healing secrets of Peruvian parrots to the underwater fireworks sparked by spawning corals -- Amazing Animals, from lizards that walk on water to fish that spend the night in slimy sleeping bags to birds that feast on blood -- Microscopic Marvels, from destructive plant viruses that hitch rides with insects to friendly fungi that supply trees with essential minerals -- Heavenly Amazements, from diamond showers that fall from the sun to comets, quasars and blue moons -- Forces of Nature, from the world's tallest waterfall to horrific hurricanes, terrifying tornadoes and volatile volcanoes

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**polar bear vs hippo:** From Jungle to Zoo Ellen Velvin, 1914

**polar bear vs hippo:** Proceedings of the Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow, 1914

**polar bear vs hippo:** Whittling in Your Free Time Tom Hinds, 2020-10-01 In continuation of the bestselling 20-Minute Whittling Projects, author, whittling artist, carving teacher, and

Woodcarving Illustrated contributor Tom Hindes brings you 16 more fast, easy, and fun whittling projects to complete in just one short sitting! With step-by-step instructions, high-quality photography, and a focus on the beginner-friendly flat-plane style of whittling, you'll carve a variety of safari, aquatic, woodland, farm, and domestic animals. Progressing from very simple to more challenging, each project is meant to encourage you along the rewarding and relaxing path of whittling and build your skills. Whether you're new to whittling or have been doing it for years and want to try a new method, this book is the go-to resource to keep on carving! ·

**polar bear vs hippo:** The Silent Readers William Dodge Lewis, Albert Lindsay Rowland, 1920

**polar bear vs hippo:** Who Would Win?: Walrus vs. Elephant Seal Jerry Pallotta, 2020-12-29

What if a walrus and an elephant seal had a fight? Who do you think would win? This nonfiction reader compares and contrasts two ferocious animals. Readers will learn about each animal's anatomy, behavior, and more. Then compare and contrast the battling pair before finally discovering the winner! This nonfiction series is full of facts, photos, and realistic illustrations, and it includes a range of mammals, sea creatures, insects, and dinosaurs to satisfy all kinds of animal fans.

**polar bear vs hippo:** Under the Punkah Phil Robinson, 1891

**polar bear vs hippo:** Hippopotamus Michael Leach, 2001 Explains the physical characteristics, habits, habitat, and threats to the hippopotamus.

**polar bear vs hippo:** Playing the Unconscious Michael Gunter, 2018-04-24 This book offers a most interesting view of the application of the Winnicott squiggle game outside the context of therapeutic consultations. It concentrates on describing the inner mechanisms for coping which came to light in the psychoanalytical squiggle interviews with the children.

**polar bear vs hippo:** The Desert Rose Larry McMurtry, 2010-06-01 Pulitzer Prize-winner Larry McMurtry writes novels set in the American heartland, but his real territory is the heart itself. His gift for writing about women—their love for reckless, hopeless men; their ability to see the good in losers; and their peculiar combination of emotional strength and sudden weakness—makes *The Desert Rose* the bittersweet, funny, and touching book that it is. Harmony is a Las Vegas showgirl with the best legs in town. At night she's a lead dancer in a gambling casino; during the day she raises peacocks. She throws her love away on second-rate men, but wakes up in the morning full of hope. She's one of a dying breed of dancers, faced with fewer and fewer jobs and an even bleaker future. Yet, she maintains a calm cheerfulness in that arid neon landscape of supermarkets, drive-in wedding chapels, and all-night casinos. While Harmony's star is fading, her beautiful, cynical daughter Pepper's is on the rise. But Harmony remains wistful and optimistic through it all. She is the unexpected blossom in the wasteland, the tough and tender desert rose. Hers is a loving portrait that only Larry McMurtry could render.

**polar bear vs hippo:** The Explorers Martin Dugard, 2014-06-03 In *The Explorers*, New York Times bestselling author Martin Dugard shares the rich saga of the Burton and Speke expedition. To better understand their motivations and ultimate success, Dugard guides readers through the seven vital traits that Burton and Speke, as well as many of history's legendary explorers, called upon to see their impossible journeys through to the end: curiosity, hope, passion, courage, independence, self-discipline, and perseverance.--www.Amazon.com.

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