



Name _____

Date _____

BLACK WIDOWS

One of the most feared spiders is the black widow. It is not only the unusual name but also the fear of being bitten by a black widow. There is good reason for this fear. The black widow spider is the most venomous spider in the United States. The black widow's venom is much more toxic than that of the rattlesnake. The black widow, however, is not usually deadly to adults because it only inserts a small amount of venom.

The black widow gets its name from the fact that after the male and female spiders mate, the female will eat the male spider. The black widow is found mainly in warm areas of the world. This spider is a shiny black color with a red hourglass shape on its abdomen. The black widow hangs upside down in her web and seldom leaves. She feeds on other insects such as flies, cockroaches, and beetles. Once caught in the web, the black widow will make small holes in the insects and suck out all of the juices.

The bite of a black widow spider is not necessarily painful, and it may go unnoticed. But the resulting abdominal pains and pain in the soles of the feet will soon follow. Other signs of being bitten by a black widow are sore muscles, swollen eyelids, and extreme sweating. Those with heart conditions may have to spend time in a hospital. You can see that playing around with this spider is not wise.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. Which statement explains how the black widow eats its prey?
 - a. She feeds on other insects such as flies, cockroaches, and beetles.
 - b. The black widow spider is the most venomous spider in the United States.
 - c. The black widow will stalk its prey.
 - d. Once caught in the web, the black widow will make small holes in the insects and suck out all of the juices.
2. Which statement is true?
 - a. The black widow eats her babies.
 - b. The black widow must be careful once she has mated.
 - c. The black widow's poison is more venomous than the rattlesnake.
 - d. The black widow is an endangered spider.
3. In this passage, the word *toxic* means . . .
 - a. unchanged.
 - b. unharmed.
 - c. lethal.
 - d. unchallenged.