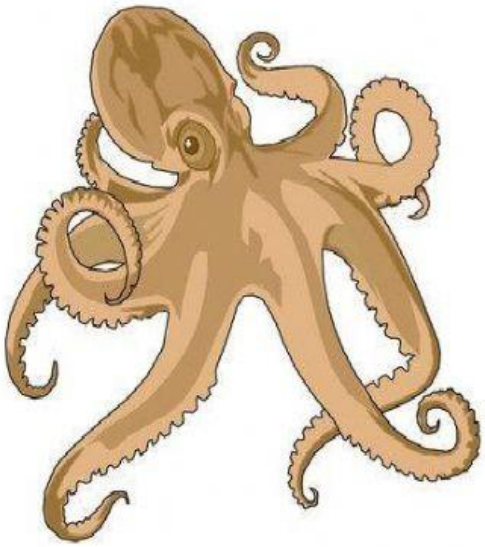
MAGICIAN OF THE SEA

by Kelly Hashway



What do three hearts, eight arms, and one huge brain add up to? An octopus, a creature that can-do amazing things.

Octopuses are extremely intelligent. They can learn new things just like humans. They've even learned a few tricks to get them out of sticky situations. If an octopus is threatened by a predator, such as a shark or bird, it can use some pretty incredible skills to get away. Octopuses don't have teeth or sharp claws to defend themselves. Instead, they use more clever ways to fool their attackers. Octopuses like to hide themselves in the sand on the bottom of the ocean floor. How you ask? Well, the octopus is like a chameleon because it can change the color of its skin to match the sand. And this color change, or camouflage, happens in less than a minute.

Some octopuses like to stay in more shallow water where there are rocks and coral. Because octopuses are invertebrates, meaning they don't have backbones, they can squeeze themselves into small spaces between the rocks to get out of reach of their predators. Another way an octopus can hide is by shooting ink. An octopus uses a part of its body called a siphon to shoot ink into the water. The ink forms a cloud that hides the octopus. By the time the ink clears and the predator can see again, the octopus has swum away or hidden. It's very much like a magician doing a vanishing act.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

If you think that's a neat trick, then you'll love what else these creatures have up their sleeves. If an octopus is being attacked, it can actually make itself look like a venomous sea snake. It will bury itself in the sand, keeping two arms visible. It will change the color of those arms to match a sea snake. But what if there's no time to hide? If an octopus is in trouble, it can break off one of its arms. The arm will then change colors and squirm around in the water to distract the predator while the octopus swims away to safety. Don't worry though. The octopus's arm will grow back.

There is one kind of octopus that has venom to use in defense. The blue-ringed octopus is tiny; it could fit in the palm of your hand. Predators might think this size makes the octopus a great snack, but they know to stay away. The blue-ringed octopus is very poisonous and can kill predators much larger than itself, including humans.



So, the next time you see an octopus in the aquarium or while you're snorkeling, remember that inside that oversized head is a very large brain, making them a clever addition to the sea.

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Name: _____

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1. How are an octopus and a chameleon alike?

- **a.** They both like to hide on the ocean floor.
- **b.** They can both change the color of their skin.
- **c.** They are both invertebrates.
- **d.** They both use their arms to kill predators.

2. What happens to an octopus if it loses one of its eight arms?

- **a.** It will grow a new one.
- **b.** It will die.
- **c.** It is no longer poisonous.
- **d.** It can swim faster.

3. What is the author's purpose for writing this article?

- **a.** to explain how octopuses, eat, live, and play
- **b.** to show how dangerous octopuses are
- **c.** to describe the physical characteristics of octopuses
- **d.** to explain how octopuses protect themselves

Vocabulary Activity

The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. _____ t i i e e g t l l n n

hint: smart; brainy

2. _____ m u a f c l o e g a

hint: ability to blend in

3. _____ r i b n e v e t a e r t

hint: animal without a backbone

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Name: _____



4_____ b e i s v i l

hint: in sight; able to be seen

5. _____ t e s o r d p a r

hint: animals that hunt other animals

6. _____ r o k s e n g n i l

hint: diving under water with a breathing tube

7. _____ n i m a c g i a

hint: person who performs trick

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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