



Name _____ Date _____

THE SILKWORM

The silkworm is actually the larva of a moth. This interesting creature changed the way fabric was used and clothes were made. The silkworm received its name because it literally produces silk. As it spins its cocoon, it weaves a long piece of raw silk. This single continuous piece of silk can be as long as 900 meters. The fibers of this piece of silk are very fine.

The silkworm was discovered in China and Persia over 4,000 ago. Today, over 70 million pounds of silk are produced each year. The silkworm's diet consists of only mulberry leaves. The silkworm is a voracious eater, eating mulberry leaves day and night. This causes the silkworm to grow very quickly.

A silkworm spins a cocoon of silk threads around itself. Before the moth hatches from the cocoon, the cocoon is thrown into boiling water. If the moth comes out of the cocoon on its own, it will break the silk and it will be deemed useless. Each cocoon holds between 500 and 1200 yards of silk. That is a lot of silk from one cocoon!

The story of how silk was discovered tells of a Chinese empress who was drinking tea under a mulberry tree. One of the cocoons fell into the tea. She noticed the uncoiling of the cocoon. This silk thread was soon used in weaving and fabrics. Silk became a huge part of the Chinese economy as a result of this. The Chinese would trade fine silk with the rest of the world. How the silk was produced remained a secret for many years.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. Which of the following statements is an opinion?
 - a. The silkworm produces a long strand of silk.
 - b. The silk from the silkworm was discovered in China.
 - c. A Chinese empress is credited with discovering silk.
 - d. It was smart of the Chinese to keep the silk a secret.
2. Which paragraph provides information about when silk was discovered?
 - a. first paragraph
 - b. second paragraph
 - c. third paragraph
 - d. fourth paragraph
3. A synonym for the word *literally* in the first paragraph is . . .
 - a. factually.
 - b. insistently.
 - c. encouragingly.
 - d. ordinarily.