



Name _____

Date _____

THE PRAYING MANTIS

The praying mantis has one of the most unusual names for an insect. How did this insect get its name? The praying mantis got its name because of the way it sits and waits for its prey. The way that the praying mantis sits makes it look like it is praying. Did you know that the praying mantis is related to the cockroach?

The praying mantis is a meat-eating insect. It eats beetles, butterflies, crickets, grasshoppers, spiders, and even other praying mantises. An adult praying mantis can sometimes eat small reptiles or small hummingbirds! A praying mantis is green or tan, and its back makes it look like a leaf. This means that it is easy for the praying mantis to be camouflaged. A praying mantis also has wings. The adult is usually 3–6 inches long. Some species can get even longer.

The praying mantis is a very quick predator. It waits for the right size bug to come along and snaps its “arms” out quickly. The claws on the “arms” make it impossible for the insect to escape the praying mantis. Bats eat praying mantises. The praying mantis tends to fly more at night. This makes it a perfect target for bats.

STORY QUESTIONS

- Where in the passage do you find out which insect the praying mantis is related to?
 - end of the first paragraph
 - middle of the second paragraph
 - end of the third paragraph
 - from the title
- What does the praying mantis have that helps the bat spot it at night?
 - claw-like arms
 - wings
 - eggs
 - strong scent
- The writer probably wrote this passage to . . .
 - warn humans of the praying mantis.
 - enlighten farmers to the benefits of the praying mantis.
 - determine the genealogy of the praying mantis.
 - inform the reader about the praying mantis.
- Which of these is not a fact about the praying mantis?
 - The praying mantis is a meat-eating insect.
 - The praying mantis catches its prey.
 - The praying mantis is red in color.
 - The praying mantis is about 3–6 inches long.



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THE BISON

One of the most hunted animals of all time is the bison. The bison, also known as the buffalo, used to number between 30 and 60 million. Today there are only about 200,000 bison remaining. Only 16,000 of these are wild bison. The wild, free-roaming bison are located at Yellowstone National Park. People used to kill the bison for their thick, furry hides. Bison almost became extinct in 1890. Efforts were then made to try and save the bison.

The bison eat grasses and sedges. *Sedge* is a type of plant. Bison are known to keep moving as they graze on the grasses. This keeps any area from being overgrazed. The bison is a big animal. In fact, it is the heaviest land mammal in North America. The bison can get as big as 2,200 pounds. It stands anywhere from 5 to 6 ½ feet tall.

Bison are social animals that live in herds of about 20–50. The females lead the herd. The bulls (males) live alone or in small groups. The bison can reach speeds as fast as 35 miles per hour. Look out!

STORY QUESTIONS

- Ranchers and farmers would probably like to have bison graze on their land because . . .
 - bison are shy and feisty animals.
 - bison keep moving as they eat, which prevents overgrazing.
 - can reach speeds up to 35 mph.
 - bison live in herds or small groups.
- According to the passage, what efforts do you think were made to prevent the extinction of the bison?
 - bison were let free and allowed to roam wild
 - laws were passed and rules made about the killing of bison
 - the president made it illegal to shoot a bison
 - bison live in herds or small groups
- What is the main idea of the passage?
 - The bison can run very quickly.
 - The bison engage in social activity.
 - The bison is an extinct animal.
 - The bison is an interesting animal and has an interesting history.
- The bison is the heaviest land mammal in . . .
 - North America.
 - South America.
 - the Orient.
 - Central America.



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FLAMINGOS

Can you imagine what a pink bird with long legs would look like? If so, you would be picturing a flamingo. In fact, a flamingo stands up to 51 inches tall, but only weighs approximately seven-and-a-half pounds. It takes about two years for a flamingo to reach its full height. The male flamingo stands taller than the female flamingo.

The bright pinkish color for which the flamingo is known doesn't come right away. Baby flamingos are born gray or white. It is said that the feathers of a flamingo turn pink because of the food they eat. The flamingo's legs are very long and spindly. What looks like the flamingo's knee is actually its ankle joint. The knee is located up closer to the body. The flamingo has webbing between its toes to aid in swimming and stirring up food.

So, what does the flamingo eat? Well, it's probably not something you will find on your dinner plate any time soon. The flamingo eats algae, insect larva, adult insects, crustaceans, and small fish. The shape of a flamingo's bill will determine the type of food it will eat. Flamingos have either a shallow or deep-keeled bill. The flamingos with shallow bills eat more of the fish and crustaceans. The ones with deep-keeled bills eat more of the algae. You might have seen a flamingo hang its head upside down in the water. The flamingo was probably eating. Yum!

STORY QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of the webbing between the toes of the flamingo?
 - a. to stabilize the flamingo from falling over
 - b. a characteristic used to identify the difference between flamingo species
 - c. to help the flamingo protect itself
 - d. to aid the flamingo in swimming and gathering food
2. Identify a supporting detail that explains the statement, "The shape of a flamingo's bill will determine the type of food it will eat."
 - a. Flamingos have either a shallow or deep-keeled bill.
 - b. The flamingos with shallow bills eat more of the fish and crustaceans.
 - c. The flamingo's legs are very long and spindly.
 - d. The male flamingo stands taller than the female flamingo.
3. After reading the passage, which question could you answer about the flamingo?
 - a. How does the flamingo protect itself?
 - b. How many different types of flamingos are there?
 - c. What is the best known reason as to how the flamingo gets the color in its feathers?
 - d. How does the mother flamingo feed her young?



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THE GIRAFFE

Can you name the tallest mammal? If you said giraffe, you are correct. The male giraffe is taller than the female giraffe. Did you know that the male giraffe can get as tall as 19 feet? The female giraffe is still very tall. She gets as tall as 16 feet. The giraffe is a heavy mammal. A male giraffe can weigh between 2,000–3,000 pounds.

In the wild, the giraffe usually lives about 25 years. The giraffe lives mostly in Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa. A giraffe makes its home on the savannas of Africa. The savanna has tall trees, arid land, open plains, and forests. The giraffe eats leaves from the trees for nourishment. They usually eat the leaves of the acacia tree. A giraffe can go a very long time without drinking water. It is able to get moisture from the tree leaves.

The giraffe is a social animal, which means that it likes to live in groups with other giraffes, called herds. These herds can get very large and are not organized in any specific way. Because giraffes have such interesting coats, they are often hunted. They are also hunted for their meat and tails. The tails are made into good-luck bracelets. Unfortunately, there are no current laws protecting the giraffe.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. Which sentence in the last paragraph shows how the author feels about hunting giraffes?
 - a. Giraffes are hunted for their meat and tails.
 - b. Unfortunately, there are no current laws protecting the giraffe.
 - c. The giraffe has such an interesting coat.
 - d. The tails are made into good luck bracelets.
2. According to this passage, giraffes are hunted for their . . .
 - a. interesting coats and tails.
 - b. great height.
 - c. good luck.
 - d. meat and teeth.
3. You can conclude that a giraffe would probably do well living in . . .
 - a. the Sonoran Desert.
 - b. mountain ranges.
 - c. dry land with plenty of trees.
 - d. the Everglades.



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THE MONARCH BUTTERFLY

Have you ever heard of a royal butterfly? That would be the monarch butterfly. The monarch butterfly gets its name from its beautiful color and regal look. The monarch butterfly is bright orange with black veins and white dots.

A butterfly is a type of insect. It has six legs, three body parts, wings, and a pair of eyes. The monarch butterfly goes through a long process to get to its final stage. Each butterfly begins as an egg. The larva hatches from the egg in about three to five days. The larvae are in the shape of a caterpillar. In this stage, the larva eats until it gets to be about two inches long, which takes about a week. It will then find a hidden branch. Here it forms into a pupa or a chrysalis. It takes between 10 and 12 days for the butterfly to form and emerge from its chrysalis. As an adult, the butterfly can only drink liquids.

It may surprise you to learn that the monarch butterfly is poisonous. Animals that eat the monarch get sick and vomit. These animals remember the brightly-colored butterfly and learn to avoid it. The nonpoisonous viceroy butterfly mimics the color of the monarch butterfly to avoid being eaten. Monarch butterflies are found in fields, marshes, meadows, and in the garden. You may have a monarch butterfly flying around your garden right now.

STORY QUESTIONS

1. In this passage, the word *mimics* means?
 - a. mocks
 - b. imitates
 - c. patronizes
 - d. humiliates
2. Which statement is false?
 - a. The monarch butterfly is poisonous.
 - b. The monarch butterfly emerges from a chrysalis.
 - c. The monarch butterfly mimics the viceroy butterfly.
 - d. The larva hatches from the egg.
3. From start to finish, how long does it take for the monarch butterfly to go from an egg to a butterfly?
 - a. two weeks
 - b. 10 to 14 days
 - c. six months
 - d. about three weeks