8 Insect Invasion

Imagine that you wake up one morning and look out your window. The trees are covered with large black bugs about three centimeters long, with bright red eyes. They make a noise so loud it causes the neighborhood dogs to howl. Is it a bad science fiction movie? A plague* from the Bible? Actually, it's a scene that happens every 17 years in many parts of the United States, when the periodic cicadas (pronounced si-KAY-duz) emerge from underground.

The cicadas become adults

The cicadas live under the earth, where they survive by eating sap* from the roots of trees. No one understands exactly how they do it, but somehow they know how much time has passed. One day, when they are 17 years old, usually around sunset, all the cicadas begin to make their way out of the ground. Enormous numbers of cicadas appear at one time – millions and millions of them. They climb into trees, lose their outer shells, and become adults. Over the next few days, their wings grow and the insects change color – from white to black.

The mating sounds

Soon after, the males begin their mating call in order to attract females. They can be as loud as 80 to 100 decibels – the same sound level as an electric hammer or a train coming into a station. While some people enjoy listening to the cicadas, others find this sound extremely annoying. Although cicadas can easily disrupt outdoor festivals and weddings, they're harmless to humans. They don't bite or carry diseases.

The life-cycle of the cicadas

Once above ground, cicadas live for only four to six weeks. After mating, the males die immediately while the females first place their eggs in the bark of trees and then die. The eggs hatch about six weeks later, and the tiny new bugs fall to the ground. They dig into the soil and go underground, where they will spend the next 17 years.

Where were you when the cicadas emerged?

The arrival of the periodic cicadas is an exciting time. There are many reports about the insects in the newspapers and on television. On one occasion, songs about cicadas were written and cicada T-shirts went on sale. Some people exchange recipes for special dishes with the insects, such as cicada pizza, deep-fried cicadas, and ice cream with cicada topping. The return of the cicadas marks a significant period of time in people's memories.

plague מגיפה / وباء

sap שרף נוזל מהצומח / نسغ

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Did You Understand?

1. Which TWO things are compared to the arrival of the cicadas? (lines 1-10)

   a. .....

   b. .....

2. How often do people in a particular area see periodic cicadas?

   .....

3. Name THREE physical changes that the cicadas go through after they climb into the trees. (lines 11-18)

   a. .....

   b. .....

   c. .....

4. The cicadas' mating call … .

   a. is used by the females to attract males
   b. bothers almost everyone
   c. is as loud as an electric hammer
   d. sounds like beautiful music to most people

5. a. Circle the correct answer, Yes or No. (lines 19-24)

   Cicadas are dangerous to humans. YES / NO

   b. Copy a phrase or sentence from the text which justifies your answer.

   .....

6. Complete the chart.

NUMBER	WHAT THE NUMBER REFERS TO
a.	the number of weeks cicadas live above ground
b. 80-100	
c.	the number of years a cicada lives

7. What does the word "period" mean as it is used in line 35? Copy the correct dictionary definition or define it in your own words.

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

8. Number these facts in the order they occur according to the article.

..... a. Immediately after mating the males die.

...1... b. Cicadas come out of the ground.

..... c. The females put their eggs in trees and die.

..... d. Cicadas change and become adults.

..... e. The males call to attract females.

..... f. The eggs hatch and the small new bugs go underground.

Vocabulary

A. Complete the sentences with the following words.

occasion soil enormous periodic
exchanged memories harmless

1. I saw an ..... bee yesterday. It was almost the size of a mouse!
2. Shelly and I ..... sandwiches yesterday. I ate hers and she ate mine.
3. My allergies are ..... . They come every spring.
4. If the ..... is too dry, the corn won't grow.
5. My brother has very early childhood ..... . He remembers his first day in kindergarten.
6. That dog is ..... . I promise he won't bite you.
7. My birthday is a special ..... , so I can go to sleep late.

B. Mark each statement T (True) or F (False) to show you understand the words in bold.

..... 1. Some **insects** bite people and others don't.

..... 2. Healthy people have a **disease**.

..... 3. Honey **attracts** bears.

..... 4. You can find great **recipes** in a music book.

..... 5. Dolphins have to **emerge** from the water to breathe.

..... 6. The Israeli army has **male** and **female** soldiers.

..... 7. September 1st **marks** the last day of school.

..... 8. Too many flies can **disrupt** a picnic.

LIVEWORKSHEETS