

- 1 Read the dictionary entry and look at the title of the text.

**phobia** /fəʊbiə/ (n) = an unreasonable fear of something

What is arachnophobia?  
fear of insects? fear of spiders?

- 2 a) Check the words/phrases below in the Word List at the back of the book. Use them to fill in the sentences.

• **creepy** • **arachnid** • **venom** • **harm** • **treatment**  
• **nutritious** • **suffer** • **sweat**

- A spider is a(n) ....., not an insect.
- A lot of people ..... from arachnophobia. They ..... each time they see a spider.
- Most spiders produce ..... but only 1% can ..... people.
- Some people eat spiders because they consider them a ..... meal.
- Spiders are useful; they trap and eat ..... crawlies.
- Sufferers of arachnophobia can follow a specific ..... called exposure therapy.

# ARACHNOPHOBIA



1

What happens when you see a spider? Does your hair stand on end? Do you **scream** and run away? If so, you're not alone. Fear of spiders, or arachnophobia (from the Greek words *arachne* – spider – and *phobos* – fear), is one of the most common **phobias** that people **suffer** from, with about 50% of females and up to 25% of males feeling afraid of our 'eight-legged friends'. About 3% of people avoid spiders **at all costs**, refusing to enter a room until it has been checked for arachnids and **blocking** plugholes so that they can't crawl up them!

2

Spiders have been **hated** for thousands of years, but like most phobias, arachnophobia is **irrational**. Although most spiders produce venom, fewer than 1% can harm humans. That's only 200 species out of about 42,000. Maybe it's a spider's ugly appearance that causes the fear, or because they often appear suddenly and **startle** people. Culture plays a part, too. The Pirao Indians in the Amazon rainforest aren't afraid of spiders at all. For them, grilled tarantula is a tasty and nutritious treat! Also, in Cambodia, deep-fried spider is a popular street snack.


## Did you Know?

- Spiders have been on Earth for 300 million years.
- They 'taste' with the hairs on their legs.
- Scientists want to use spider silk to make building materials and even armour.

### Check these words

• **scream** • **run away** • **fear** • **common**  
• **suffer from** • **eight-legged** • **at all costs** • **block**  
• **plughole** • **crawl** • **irrational** • **venom** • **harm**  
• **startle** • **play a part** • **rainforest** • **tarantula**  
• **nutritious treat** • **deep-fried** • **reduce**  
• **pest controller** • **mosquito** • **cockroach** • **fly**  
• **moth** • **exposure therapy** • **confident**  
• **treatment** • **shake** • **sweat** • **scuttle**

b) What do you think the author's purpose in writing the text is: a) to describe spiders? b) to explain how to deal with a phobia? c) to narrate a person's experience?

 Listen and read to find out. Is the text formal or informal? Give reasons.

3 Read again and match the headings (A-E) to the paragraphs (1-4). There is one extra heading. Give reasons.

- A Hope for Some
- B Why so Afraid?
- C Extreme Solution
- D A Very Common Fear
- E Great Around the House

3

Trying to see spiders like **snacks** such as chocolate bars or doughnuts (whatever they enjoy the most!) might help a person with arachnophobia. Remembering how helpful spiders are could **reduce** their fear, too. They are perfect pest controllers, **trapping and eating** many creepy-crawlies that we don't want in our homes and gardens – creatures like mosquitoes, cockroaches, flies and moths.

4

If fear of spiders badly affects someone's life, they should try 'exposure therapy'. Sufferers might start by looking at photographs of spiders. As they get more **confident**, they watch a video of a spider, and then meet the real thing. By the end of the treatment, they should even be able to **hold** a large tarantula in their hand! The aim is for people to get used to spiders and see that there is nothing to **fear**. So you see, there is hope if you are **terrified** of spiders. You don't have to shake and sweat the next time something scuttles under the sofa!

4 Based on information in the text answer the questions in your own words.

- 1 How do some people react when they see spiders?
- 2 Why is this phobia unreasonable?
- 3 What do people in different cultures think of spiders?
- 4 Why might someone try 'exposure therapy'?

5 Match the words in bold in the text to their synonyms.

- Para 1: fears, under any circumstances, closing, shout
- Para 2: unreasonable, scare, disliked
- Para 3: lower, treats, catching
- Para 4: carry, fearless, very scared, be afraid of

6 Fill in: *pest, common, therapy, snack, treat, creepy, ugly, bar, Rainforest, deep-fried*. Use the phrases to make sentences based on the text.

- 1 ..... phobia
- 2 ..... appearance
- 3 Amazon .....
- 4 ..... spider
- 5 ..... - crawlies
- 6 street .....
- 7 ..... controllers
- 8 nutritious .....
- 9 chocolate .....
- 10 exposure .....

### STUDY SKILLS

#### Finding the main idea

The main idea of a paragraph or a text is the point of it. Usually the main idea is the first sentence in a paragraph. The rest of the sentences support the main idea.


7



Find the main idea in each paragraph. Compare with your partner.

### Speaking

Tell the class three things you've learnt about arachnophobia from the text.

 Collect more information about arachnids. Tell the class.

### Writing



How can the text help someone who suffers from this phobia? In a few minutes write a few sentences, then read them to the class.