

## Honey to the Bee



Bees are flying insects that collect nectar and pollen. There are over 20,000 known species in the world. The best known is probably the honeybee.

A honeybee's body is similar to that of other insects - for instance, an ant. But bees are usually yellow and black and covered in fuzzy hair that makes collecting pollen easier. The head of a bee has five eyes for seeing and two antennae to help with their senses. Bees also have two sets of wings and three sets of legs. The last set of legs, all the way at the back of their body, has little sacks that store the pollen that the bee has collected from flowers. The bee stinger is the most feared part of a bee, and for good reason. Filled with poison, the stinger is a bee's protection from outside danger. The stingers are around 12 millimeters long.

Bees are known for being social insects, and you can probably catch them in a garden foraging for pollen that will later be used to make honey.

Bees live in beehives, which have a distinct order that helps things run smoothly. At the bottom of the totem pole are the workers. Workers are young female bees. Some of their main duties include going out to find food (nectar and pollen), building the hive and keeping it clean. Bees will travel up to eight miles if necessary to find pollen to bring back to the hive. Worker bees are actually the only bees that ever do any stinging. When this does happen, it is because they are trying to protect their hive from harm. The lifespan of a worker bee is anywhere from 4 to 9 months.

The queen bee is the biggest bee in the hive. There is usually only one per hive, and her job is to grow the family by laying eggs that will become the next generation of honeybees. She lays thousands of eggs per day and can live anywhere from 3 to 5 years. When the time comes for a new queen to take over, a worker bee is chosen from the bunch. The new queen bee is fattened up with a special meal made mostly of honey and pollen. The time that it takes for a worker bee to transform into a queen is around 16 days.

Male bees are called drones. These guys don't have stingers, which is all right, since they don't do much work anyway. Several hundred drones can live in a hive at one time. As the winter months approach, the males are kicked out of the hive in order to make it easier for the queen and her workers to survive. With fewer flowers to pollinate, food and space have to be saved, and there simply isn't enough room for the drones anymore.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is a bee?

- A an insect that lives near water and eats fish
- B a red-and-black insect that lives under the ground
- C a flying insect that collects nectar and pollen
- D a crawling insect with two sets of legs and no wings

2. What does this passage describe?

- A wings, legs, mouths, and trees
- B totem poles and winter weather
- C honeybees and beehives
- D poison and measurement

3. Different bees in a hive have different duties.

What evidence from the passage supports this statement?

- A Worker bees gather food; the queen bee lays eggs.
- B Bee stingers are about 12 millimeters long.
- C Bees have two sets of wings and three sets of legs.
- D The honeybee is probably the best known bee species.

4. Which bees are probably the least important bees in a beehive?

- A worker bees
- B the queen bee
- C female bees
- D drones

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A the lives of bees
- B what bees look like
- C bee stingers
- D antennae and wings

6. Read the following sentences: "Bees are flying insects that collect nectar and pollen. There are over 20,000 known **species** in the world. The best known is probably the honeybee."

What does the word "**species**" mean in the sentences above?

- A colors or shades
- B flowers or trees
- C kinds or types
- D duties or jobs

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

There is not enough room for all the bees in a hive to live there during the winter; \_\_\_\_\_, the drones are kicked out.

- A never
- B even though
- C including
- D consequently

8. What does a bee look like, according to the passage?

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9. What are the main duties of worker bees?

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10. Why might different bees have different duties? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.

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## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 990

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8. What does a bee look like, according to the passage?

**Suggested answer:** Answers may vary, but students should identify at least one feature described in the passage. Bees are described as usually black-and-yellow insects with fuzzy hair, two sets of wings, three sets of legs, five eyes, two antennae, and a stinger.

9. What are the main duties of worker bees?

**Suggested answer:** The main duties of worker bees are gathering food, building the hive, and keeping the hive clean.

10. Why might different bees have different duties? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.

**Suggested answer:** Answers may vary, as long as they are supported by the passage. Students may respond that bees may not be physically able to function in multiple roles at the same time. For example, a worker bee takes 16 days "to transform into a queen" and, after doing so, may be too busy laying eggs to gather food. Students may also respond that dividing duties among different bees makes it easier to kick some bees out of the hive during the winter. The drones, who do not do much work, are an obvious choice for expulsion, but they might not be if they shared food-gathering and hive-maintenance duties with the worker bees.