

Name _____

Date _____

The Duck With a Secret Stinger

Read the story carefully. Then answer the questions.

At Odd Animal Day, a sign read: MEET THE DUCK WITH A SECRET STINGER. Ari arrived wearing a paper badge that said DUCK DETECTIVE. Elliana carried crackers. Their guide, Dr. Moss, quickly hid the crackers. "This animal hunts worms and shrimp," she said. "It does not order snacks."

A brown animal paddled into view. It had thick fur, a flat tail, webbed feet, and a wide bill. "Duck!" Ari announced. The animal dove. "Furry duck!" he corrected. Dr. Moss explained that it was a platypus, a mammal from Australia. It breathed air and had fur, yet the female laid eggs. Elliana decided it looked as if five animals had been assembled during a fire drill.

The platypus shut its eyes, ears, and nostrils underwater. Ari whispered, "That is a terrible way to find lunch." It was actually excellent. Thousands of receptors in its soft bill sensed touch and the tiny electrical signals made by moving prey. The platypus swept its head from side to side like a living food detector. It found lunch without seeing, hearing, or smelling it.

Adult platypuses have no teeth. They tuck prey into cheek pouches and carry it to the surface. Small bits of gravel help them grind the meal against tough mouth pads. Ari puffed out his cheeks and pretended to store twelve sandwiches. He could fit only air, which was good because nobody wanted a gravel sandwich.

Then Dr. Moss explained platypus milk. A mother platypus has no nipples. Milk comes through special patches of skin, gathers in grooves on her belly, and the babies lap it up. Elliana blinked. "So the babies eat breakfast from a milk puddle?" Dr. Moss nodded. Ari crossed out DUCK DETECTIVE and wrote BREAKFAST PUDDLE INSPECTOR.

Finally came the secret stinger. Adult males have a sharp spur on each rear ankle. A venom gland connects to each spur. Scientists think the venom helps males compete during breeding season. It can cause terrible pain and swelling in a person, so a platypus should never be handled. Ari stared at its feet. "Eggs, fur, electric hunting, and ankle weapons? This animal has too many settings."

The platypus slapped its flat tail and vanished into the water. Its tail helped steady it while swimming and stored fat for energy. Elliana put away the crackers. The title had been a trick: the animal was not a duck, and its spur was not an insect stinger. Still, the truth was funnier. Nature had built a furry, egg-laying, gravel-chewing swimmer with an electric bill and surprise ankle venom.

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Circle the best answer.

Questions 1-10

1. What is the main idea of the story?

- A. Platypuses are dangerous ducks that steal crackers.
- B. The twins learn surprising facts about a platypus.
- C. Dr. Moss teaches the twins to cook with gravel.
- D. Elliana finds a new pet at Odd Animal Day.

6. In the story, "receptors" are parts that -

- A. store fat for later.
- B. sense information from the surroundings.
- C. hold food inside the cheeks.
- D. make fur waterproof.

2. What happened first?

- A. Ari arrived wearing a Duck Detective badge.
- B. The platypus slapped its tail.
- C. Dr. Moss explained the ankle spurs.
- D. Ari pretended to store sandwiches in his cheeks.

7. What causes the platypus's secret "stinger"?

- A. A thorn caught in its fur
- B. A sharp tooth beside its bill
- C. A tail covered with needles
- D. A venom-connected spur on a male's rear ankle

3. Why can a platypus hunt with its eyes closed?

- A. Its tail shines like a flashlight.
- B. Its fur can hear prey moving.
- C. Receptors in its bill detect movement and electrical signals.
- D. It asks ducks to point toward lunch.

8. Which word best describes Ari?

- A. Gloomy
- B. Silent
- C. Playful
- D. Uninterested

4. How does an adult platypus grind its food?

- A. With sharp front teeth
- B. With a hard beak
- C. With its webbed feet
- D. With gravel and tough mouth pads

9. Which event happened last?

- A. Dr. Moss hid the crackers.
- B. The platypus slapped its tail and disappeared.
- C. Ari puffed out his cheeks.
- D. Elliana called the animal a furry duck.

5. How do baby platypuses get milk?

- A. They lap milk from grooves on their mother's belly.
- B. They drink it through the mother's bill.
- C. They find bottles hidden in the nest.
- D. They squeeze milk from the mother's tail.

10. What is the author's main purpose?

- A. To warn readers never to visit Australia
- B. To persuade readers to feed crackers to wildlife
- C. To explain how to make a paper badge
- D. To entertain readers while teaching unusual platypus facts

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Lesson 11 Answers

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1. B

6. B

2. A

7. D

3. C

8. C

4. D

9. B

5. A

10. D