

Name _____

Date _____

The Empty Zoo's Midnight Hunters

Read carefully. The title does not mean what it first appears to mean.

Elliana and Ari had imagined their zoo overnight would include roaring lions, curious giraffes, and perhaps one polite penguin delivering room service. Instead, their sleeping bags stopped somewhere near their knees. Ari looked like a burrito that had forgotten to wrap its feet. Elliana announced that her pillow was shaped like a folded napkin with no confidence.

Then came the private behind-the-scenes tour. The first habitat was empty. The second habitat was also empty. At the third, Ari whispered, 'Maybe the animals booked better rooms.' Their guide, Ms. Nia, explained that some animals had moved into quieter night areas. The twins had received very private access - so private that even the animals had not attended.

Back at camp, the only wildlife eager to meet them arrived by the dozen. Mosquitoes buzzed around their ears like tiny helicopters with broken mufflers. Elliana slapped her ankle. Ari zipped his short sleeping bag over his head, leaving both legs outside. This protected the wrong half of him.

Ms. Nia switched on a lantern. 'Only female mosquitoes bite,' she said. Male mosquitoes feed on flower nectar and do not take blood meals. Female mosquitoes also use plant sugars for energy, but many species need nutrients from blood to develop their eggs. 'So this is a nursery supply mission?' Elliana asked. 'Unfortunately, your legs are the supply store,' said Ari.

The twins wondered why Ari seemed to be the grand-opening sale. Mosquitoes do not choose people because their blood is sweeter. They can follow carbon dioxide from breath, body heat, and skin odors. Every person's skin releases a different mixture of chemicals, partly shaped by the tiny microbes living there. Some mixtures attract certain mosquitoes more strongly. Movement and a warm, sweaty body can add even more clues. Ari sighed. 'My personal scent is apparently five-star dining.'

Ms. Nia showed them a tray of water from the education lab. Mosquitoes have four life stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Larvae live in water and wiggle, so they are often called wigglers. Pupae also live in water, but they do not eat. An adult later emerges and flies away. Some Aedes mosquitoes can go from egg to adult in only seven to ten days when conditions are right. A small water-filled container can become a nursery.

A mosquito landed on Elliana. Its proboscis pierced the skin to take blood, and its saliva entered the bite. The body's reaction to that saliva causes the familiar itchy bump. Elliana stared at it. 'It bites me, spits in me, and leaves me homework?' The mosquito escaped before answering.

By morning, the twins had seen almost no zoo animals, but they had learned more than expected. Their sleeping bags were still too short, their ankles looked like connect-the-dots, and Ari had named one mosquito Brenda. The title of their adventure had sounded like a mystery about missing zoo animals. The true midnight hunters were much smaller - and they had found the twins without any behind-the-scenes pass at all.

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Circle the best answer.

Questions 1-10

1. What is the main idea?

- A. The twins secretly release the zoo animals.
- B. A difficult zoo overnight becomes a funny mosquito science lesson.
- C. Ari learns to sew longer sleeping bags.
- D. Ms. Nia catches a lion at midnight.

6. What does 'proboscis' mean in the story?

- A. A mosquito's water stage
- B. A chemical released by skin
- C. A special mouthpart used to pierce skin and take blood
- D. A quiet room for zoo animals

2. Why were the habitats empty?

- A. Some animals had moved to quieter night areas.
- B. The twins arrived at the wrong zoo.
- C. Mosquitoes chased every animal away.
- D. Ari had hidden all the animals.

7. What is the correct life-cycle order?

- A. Adult, egg, pupa, larva
- B. Egg, pupa, larva, adult
- C. Larva, egg, adult, pupa
- D. Egg, larva, pupa, adult

3. Which event happened first?

- A. Ms. Nia showed a tray of water.
- B. A mosquito landed on Elliana.
- C. The twins discovered their sleeping bags were too short.
- D. Ari named a mosquito Brenda.

8. What causes an itchy mosquito bump?

- A. A reaction to mosquito saliva
- B. The sound of the wings
- C. Nectar left on the skin
- D. Water carried by the mosquito

4. Why do many female mosquitoes take blood meals?

- A. To make their wings louder
- B. To get nutrients needed to develop eggs
- C. To cool their bodies
- D. To feed male mosquitoes

9. What can the reader infer about Ari?

- A. He is frightened of all zoo animals.
- B. He uses humor when things go badly.
- C. He already knows every mosquito fact.
- D. He enjoys being bitten.

5. Which clues help mosquitoes find people?

- A. Breath, body heat, and skin odors
- B. Shoe size, hair length, and eye color
- C. Whispering, reading, and yawning
- D. Sleeping bags, lanterns, and maps

10. Why is the title deceptive?

- A. The hunters are mosquitoes, not large escaped zoo animals.
- B. The zoo is not actually empty.
- C. The twins hunt mosquitoes for prizes.
- D. The story takes place during the day.

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Lesson 13 Answers

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1. B

6. C

2. A

7. D

3. C

8. A

4. B

9. B

5. A

10. A

Animal facts verified with CDC and U.S. EPA mosquito resources.