

Roachzilla Returns Practice Activities

Madagascar Hissing Cockroach

The hissing cockroach is such an interesting and entertaining creature that it has become a favorite insect pet. It comes from Madagascar, an island off the coast of Africa where many other unusual animals live. You would find these cockroaches in groups on the forest floor among the fallen leaves and fruits. If you should frighten one by bumping it with your foot, it would frighten you with a sharp hiss created by forcing air out of its breathing tubes.

When you looked to see what made that hiss, you would find a big flat insect: three pairs of legs, one pair of antennae, but no wings. Wings would not be useful when rummaging in the leaves. They look like a small, flat armored tank about the size of the palm of your hand. The abdomen is brown and the thorax, to which the legs are attached, is black. These colors blend in well with the forest floor. The head is tucked under the front part of the thorax. The males are different from the females because they have rounded horns on top of the front part of the thorax.

During the day, these cockroaches rest, but at night, you would find them much more active. The males hiss and push each other with their horns and bump abdomens. The winner of this social game becomes the leader of the group. The groups of males, females, and young slowly search about hunting for food; a rotting fruit is a favorite. The leader samples the food first.

In addition, this leader fathers the brood of up to 60 babies. These babies develop from a batch of eggs that the mother carries for about two months in a brood sac. The live babies are tiny and as white as snow when they emerge, but soon they also become brown and black. Right after birth, they feed on a jelly-like substance provided by the mother. It is not yet known how she does this.

Wouldn't you like hissing cockroaches to study?

First, think about what you know about cockroaches. After thinking, please read the passage about the "Madagascar Hissing Cockroach."

Next, please complete the following activities:

1. What is the major topic of this passage?
2. Describe the habitat of the Madagascar Hissing Cockroach.
3. Describe what the Madagascar Hissing Cockroach looks like.
4. What do the cockroaches do during the day and night?
5. What did the passage say about how and why the cockroaches hiss?
6. What do these cockroaches eat?
7. Describe what the passage says about cockroaches and their babies.

Finally, after you have determined the main idea and some of the characteristics and features of the Madagascar Hissing Cockroach, create a Description Map Graphic Organizer to help you organize all the information from the passage. This will help you to better remember the author's main points.

Compare your thoughts and Description map with **Cali's Think Aloud**.

Description Text Structure

- A style of writing that authors use to describe characteristics, features, attributes, or examples of a person, place, thing, or idea.

To help describe main ideas authors will use strong adjectives and sensory word to make their description clear. Strong **SENSORY WORDS** include:

- Feels like, tastes like, smells like or sounds like.

Authors will also use signal words to organize their thoughts and help readers follow along. Strong **SIGNAL WORDS** include:

- For example, such as, or including.

As you read you should also look for other clues to aid in organizing and understanding nonfiction text. These **NONFICTION TEXT FEATURES** include:

- Titles, pictures, headings, chapter titles, glossary, index, table of contents, captions, bold/italicized/colored print, bullets, charts, maps, graphs, and diagrams.

Underground Army

Imagine digging a well, sweat dripping off your brow as your shovel plunges repeatedly into the loose soil. Suddenly, you hit something hard. What you think is a large rock is actually an astonishing archeological discovery that will captivate the world.

It began with the uncovering of one terracotta soldier in 1974, near Xi'an (she-ahn), Shaanxi province in central China. Archeologists have since dug up a complex army of not only clay soldiers and horses, but servants, musicians and acrobats, too. While over one thousand soldiers have been excavated and pieced together, more than six thousand remain buried in three chambers, 15–20 feet underground.

Each terracotta soldier stands about six feet tall. The hands and heads of the soldiers were created separately, with their own unique characteristics. There are variations in facial expressions, hairstyles, and even mustaches as well. Some soldiers look like young men, while others appear middle-aged. The torsos of the figures were made from a mold.

The mastermind behind the terracotta army project was China's First Emperor, Qin Shihuangdi (chin sure-hwang-dee). He commanded 700,000 workers to build a lifelike army that would protect him and assure his rule in the afterlife. The enormous project, which began 22 centuries ago, took over 30 years to complete.

The terracotta army is considered to be the eighth wonder of the ancient world. Excavation continues today as archeologists put the pieces together of this fascinating puzzle.

First, think about what you know about archeological discoveries. After thinking, please read the passage about the Underground Army.

Next, please answer the following questions:

1. What is the major topic of this passage?
2. When was this army discovered?
3. Where was this army discovered?
4. Describe what the soldiers in this army look like.
5. Who was the mastermind behind the creation of this army?
6. How many people worked on this project?
7. Why was this army created?
8. How long did the project take to complete?
9. This underground army is considered by some to be the 8th wonder of the ancient world. What are the other seven?
10. After learning about each of these eight wonders, which one, in your opinion, is the most impressive? Why?

Finally, after you have determined the main idea and some of the characteristics and features of the underground army, create a "Description Map Graphic Organizer" to help you organize all the information from the passage. This will help you to better remember the author's main points.

Compare your thoughts and description map with **Karen's Think Aloud**.