

DEADLY SNAKES

READING PASSAGE SHORTCUTS

Short, High-Interest
Reading Passages
and Questions

BLACK MAMBA

Often said to be the world's deadliest snake, the black mamba is poisonous, fast, and aggressive when threatened. The black mamba lives in southern and eastern Africa, where locals tell legendary tales about the snake's power.

Despite the snake's formidable, aggressive reputation, most black mambas are relatively shy. Before attacking, they usually try to escape danger. However, if the snake feels cornered, it's known to strike several times. Each time, the snake injects poison into whatever creature has encountered it. Although there are **antidotes** available, people must act fast in order to avoid death. The mamba's poison can kill in just 20 minutes.

The black mamba doesn't get its name from the color of its skin, which is usually brown or gray. Instead, this mamba gets its name from the black color of the inside of its mouth. These snakes can grow up to 14 feet long and may weigh over 3 pounds. Ground creatures, the black mamba usually makes its bed in a hollowed out log or a termite mound.

Small mammals and birds make up the majority of a black mamba's diet. When hunting or fleeing, the mamba uses its great speed. The black mamba can slither at speeds of up to 12 miles per hour! That's pretty fast, considering when humans run a 4 minute mile, they run at a speed of 15 miles per hour.

The black mamba is a beautiful creature. If people respect snakes and their territory, there's no need to worry about getting bitten.

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

1. How fast can the mamba's poison kill?
a) 4 minutes b) 20 minutes c) 4 minutes
2. What is an **antidote**?
a) cure b) poison c) snake
3. Describe the diet of a black mamba.

4. Describe 2 things that happen if the snake is cornered.
a) _____
b) _____
5. Name 3 physical characteristics of the black mamba.
a) _____
b) _____
c) _____
6. What is the purpose of this passage?
a) to inform b) to entertain
7. How fast can the black mamba travel?

8. Where in the world can the black mamba be found?

KING COBRA

Can you imagine a deadly snake looking you directly in the eyes? A king cobra can do just that when it feels threatened. These large snakes are very poisonous, even able to kill elephants within a few hours. However, there is much more to these snakes than their deadly bite.

The king cobra lives in Asia, **inhabiting** areas of India, Indonesia, and other close by countries. It's known for its hood just below the head, which it can expand when it feels a need to defend itself. The king cobra is also the longest of all the world's venomous snakes, reaching lengths of up to 18 feet long. King cobras can be a variety of colors such as green, yellow, black, or brown. The upper belly of the snake is usually beige or light yellow.

Despite the fact that the king cobra's venom is deadly for people and animals alike, it's also an important medicine. Through studying the cobra's venom, scientists made an important pain reliever that's used for people who have arthritis.

Unfortunately, king cobras are vanishing and their numbers are dwindling. They are disappearing because their habitats are being destroyed. People hunt king cobras to eat or to use their skin. In addition, some people keep king cobras as pets. Other people kill king cobras on sight because they're scared of them.

In addition to being deadly, venomous snakes, king cobras are also beautiful animals. We should work hard to preserve their habitats and leave these animals alone.

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

1. How long can the king cobra grow to be?
a) 18 inches b) 3 feet c) 18 feet
2. What does the word **inhabiting** mean?
a) hitting b) living in c) coloring
3. Describe the coloring of the king cobra.

4. How has the king cobra's venom helped in the field of medicine?

5. Name 4 reasons the king cobra could become extinct.
a) _____
b) _____
c) _____
6. What is the purpose of this passage?
a) to inform b) to entertain c) to persuade
7. What happens to the hood of the king cobra when it is threatened?

8. Where in the world can the king cobra be found?

GRADES 3-5

Created by: Shelly Rees

DEADLY SNAKES

READING PASSAGE SHORTCUTS

THE BOA CONSTRICTOR

What if instead of having a pet cat to catch mice, you had a pet boa constrictor? Some South American people do exactly this to keep their rat and mouse populations under control. These amazing snakes are known for their excellent hunting skills and beautiful skin patterns.

Boa constrictors are native to Central and South America, but are popular pets all over the world. Relatives of the famous anaconda, these snakes are much smaller. The largest of the boa constrictors weigh a maximum of 100 pounds and measure up to 18 feet long. At this size, these **nonvenomous** snakes can scarf down animals such as wild hogs and monkeys. They also eat smaller prey such as birds, lizards, and rodents. Boa constrictors can swim, but spend most of their time on dry land instead.

Female boa constrictors can birth an impressive 60 baby snakes at once. When born, the snakes usually measure about 2 feet long. These incredible snakes never stop growing. In the best conditions, boa constrictors can live for 20 to 30 years. Unfortunately many of the snakes are hunted for their attractive skins. People use the skin as leather to make boots, purses, and shoes. For this reason, some species of boa constrictors are protected.

As their name suggests, boa constrictors kill their prey by squeezing them. Eventually, their prey stops breathing or their blood supply is cut off. Then, the snake swallows the creature whole. After eating, the boa constrictor has to rest awhile in order to digest the big meal.

Boa constrictors are interesting animals with beautiful, colorful skins. With any luck, if you keep one in your house, you'll never have to worry about a mouse problem again.

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

Name _____ Date _____

1. How much is the maximum weight of a boa constrictor?
a) 18 pounds b) 100 pounds c) 60 pounds
2. What does the word **nonvenomous** mean?
a) not poisonous b) loud c) poisonous
3. Describe the diet of the boa constrictor.

4. Describe how boa constrictors kill their prey.

5. Why are some species of boa constrictors protected?

6. How many babies can a female birth at once?
a) 180 b) 100 c) 60
7. How long _____ constrictor measure?

8. Why does the boa constrictor have to rest after eating?

9. Some people keep boa constrictors as pets to control the rat and mouse population.
True or False? _____



©Shelly Rees

5 Snake Passages:

- Black Mamba
- King Cobra
- Boa Constrictor
- Saw-Scaled Viper
- Rattlesnake

Each informational passage is ½ page for a reading in a short time-frame.
The questions are both multiple choice and open ended.

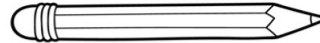
DEADLY SNAKES

ANNOTATION GUIDE INCLUDED

Copy and cut
down the
center to
provide easy-
to-use
annotation
guides for
students to use!

ANNOTATING MARKS

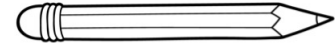
As you read through the passage,
make the following marks on your page.



- Number the paragraphs.
- Circle powerful words or phrases.
- Underline words or phrases you do not understand.
- Place a question mark near something that makes you think of a question.
- Write an exclamation mark near something that surprises you.
- Draw an arrow where you make a personal connection to certain ideas.

ANNOTATING MARKS

As you read through the passage,
make the following marks on your page.



- Number the paragraphs.
- Circle powerful words or phrases.
- Underline words or phrases you do not understand.
- Place a question mark near something that makes you think of a question.
- Write an exclamation mark near something that surprises you.
- Draw an arrow where you make a personal connection to certain ideas.