

# Informational Texts

## *Things I Didn't Know about Animals*

### for

## Task Cards/Literacy Centers

### Focusing on

## Main Idea and Supporting Details

### Where the House Flies Are

House flies have been annoying humans for thousands of years but not on purpose. They have to live with or near humans to survive.

From the time they are wiggly larvae to their adulthood, house flies feed on liquids from human food scraps and other wastes. They also slurp up solids, such as left-over hamburger, after they soften it with their own saliva or vomit.

When a female house fly is ready to lay eggs, a nice pile of rotting garbage is the perfect place for her 500 or so maggot babies to feast and grow.

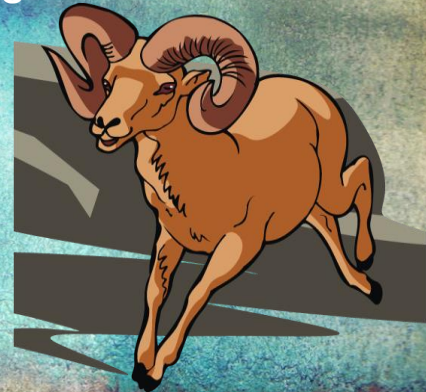
House flies buzz around during the day, but at night they rest tucked into the corner of a room, a barn, or some other human structure. Snug in their cozy man-made shelters, they can survive the coldest of winter freezes.

Even with all the human conveniences they enjoy, house flies live only two to four weeks.



### Where the House Flies Are

- The main idea of this article is
  - why house flies live with or near humans.
  - how house flies grow.
  - why house flies like garbage.
  - why house flies are annoying.
- Put check marks in the blanks next to the 4 details that support the article's main idea.
  - Flies feed on human food scraps and other wastes.
  - Flies rest at night in houses, barns, and other buildings.
  - House flies survive the winter by finding shelter in man-made structures.
  - Female flies lay about 500 eggs.
  - Female house flies lay eggs in rotting



### How a Starfish Has Lunch

A starfish can't chew its food because it has no teeth, but that doesn't stop it from having lunch.

When it finds its favorite food, such as a clam or an oyster, it first pries open the protective shell with its arms. Then it does something amazing.

Imagine grabbing the end of your shirt sleeve and pulling it through the armhole as you take it off. That's exactly what the starfish does with its stomach. It pushes it, inside-out, through its mouth and into the open shell. Stomach juices immediately start digesting the victim outside the starfish's body. No other animal can do this. Because of this unique ability, a starfish can eat prey much larger than its tiny mouth.

At the right moment, the animal pulls its stomach back inside its body. Then the partially dissolved food is absorbed.



### How a Starfish Has Lunch

- The main idea of this article is
  - what a starfish eats.
  - how a starfish survive.
  - the unusual way a starfish eats.
  - a starfish's stomach.
- Put check marks in the blanks next to the 4 details that support the article's main idea.
  - A starfish eats clams and oysters.
  - A starfish pries open an oyster or clam shell with its arms.
  - When ready to eat, a starfish pushes its stomach, inside-out, through its mouth and onto its prey.
  - A starfish starts digesting its food outside its body.
  - Starfish have small mouths.
  - A starfish absorbs its food through a second stomach.
- Why is a starfish different from all other animals?
  - It has five arms.
  - It can open a clam shell or an oyster shell.
  - It has two stomachs.
  - It begins digesting its food outside its body.
- Which context clue tells the reader that *unique* means

### The World's Best Jumper

Athletes have set many records for broad jumps and high jumps. However, the world's best jumper is not a human.

Barely visible at 1/16 to 1/8 of an inch long, it has six legs, but it uses only its hind pair to jump. It can launch itself forward 13 inches—more than 220 times its body length—and vault straight up 7 inches—150 times its own body height.

If a human had the same ability, a 6 foot man could leap forward 295 feet—more than ¼ of a football field—and spring straight up 160 feet—the height of a 16-story building.

It's body size/jumping-skills ratio makes it the world's best jumper.

And the title holder is . . .



. . . the common, ordinary, despicable flea!

Sometimes you have to give credit where credit is due, even when it's a blood-sucking pest.

### The World's Best Jumper

- The main idea of this article is
  - how far people can jump.
  - why fleas are pests.
  - how jumping skills are calculated.
  - a flea's jumping ability.
- Put check marks in the blanks next to the 4 details that support the article's main idea.
  - Fleas are pests.
  - A flea can jump 220 times its length.
  - A flea's jumping skills are better than those of a human.
  - Fleas can jump 150 times their height.
  - The world's best jumper is not a human.
  - Human athletes have set many records.
- In this article, the word *vault* means
  - an underground storage facility.
  - a locked box.
  - jump.
  - a burial chamber.
- The *ratio* that makes the flea the world's best jumper is a comparison of
  - its body size and the distance it can jump.
  - its jumping distances and a human's.
  - its leg length and jumping distance.
  - its weight and height.
- Which phrase helps unlock the meaning of *despicable*?
  - blood-sucking pest
  - barely visible
  - title holder
  - give credit





# Informational Texts

## about Animals

by Margaret Whisnant

for

## Task Cards/Literacy Centers

Focusing on

## Main Idea and Identifying Supporting Details

This set of 12 informational texts are intended for use as whole class lessons, full-page task cards, or in a literacy center. They can also be easily adapted as individual folder activities. Interesting facts about animals, some real and some imaginary, are featured in each article.

Every lesson contains **a half-page text and a set of 3-5 CCSS aligned questions**. The first two focus on the article's main idea and its supporting details. Other questions address a variety of CCSS skills including cause and effect, sequencing, inference, and using context clues to determine word meaning.

Students may write their answers on notebook paper or on the quarter page answer forms specifically designed for each text. A set of full answer keys is included.

The reading level is appropriate for most 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. The material can be used to teach, reinforce, or remediate the targeted CCSS skills. Some 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students as well as 3<sup>rd</sup> graders may also find these texts beneficial.



Margaret Whisnant



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(with 3 CCSS Aligned Questions)

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(with 4 CCSS Aligned Questions)

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## Where the House Flies Are

House flies have been annoying humans for thousands of years but not on purpose. They have to live with or near humans to survive.

From the time they are wiggly larvae to their adulthood, house flies feed on liquids from human food scraps and other wastes. They also slurp up solids, such as left-over hamburger, after they soften them with their own saliva or vomit.



When a female house fly is ready to lay eggs, a nice pile of rotting garbage is the perfect place for her 500 or so maggot babies to feast and grow.

House flies buzz around during the day, but at night they rest tucked into the corner of a room, a barn, or some other human structure. Snug in their cozy man-made shelters, they can survive the coldest of winter freezes.

Even with all the human conveniences they enjoy, house flies live only two to four weeks.

## Where the House Flies Are

1. The **main idea** of this article is
  - A. why house flies live with or near humans.
  - B. how house flies grow.
  - C. why house flies like garbage.
  - D. why house flies are annoying.
2. Put check marks in the blanks next to the 4 details that **support** the article's **main idea**.  
\_\_\_\_\_ A. Flies feed on human food scraps and other wastes.  
\_\_\_\_\_ B. Flies rest at night in houses, barns, and other buildings.  
\_\_\_\_\_ C. House flies survive the winter by finding shelter in man-made structures.  
\_\_\_\_\_ D. Female flies lay about 500 eggs.  
\_\_\_\_\_ E. Female house flies lay eggs in rotting garbage.  
\_\_\_\_\_ F. House flies live only two to four weeks.
3. Put the following events in the correct sequence by numbering them 1-4.  
\_\_\_\_\_ A. Maggots hatch from the eggs and feed on rotting garbage.  
\_\_\_\_\_ B. Adult house flies continue to feed on garbage and other wastes all their lives.  
\_\_\_\_\_ C. An adult house fly lays her eggs on a pile of garbage.  
\_\_\_\_\_ D. Maggots grow into adult flies.

**Antlers and Horns**  
**Answer Card**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ A

\_\_\_\_\_ B

\_\_\_\_\_ C

\_\_\_\_\_ D

\_\_\_\_\_ E

\_\_\_\_\_ F

3. \_\_\_\_\_ A

\_\_\_\_\_ B

\_\_\_\_\_ C

\_\_\_\_\_ D

\_\_\_\_\_ E

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Where the House Flies are**  
**Answer Card**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ A

\_\_\_\_\_ B

\_\_\_\_\_ C

\_\_\_\_\_ D

\_\_\_\_\_ E

\_\_\_\_\_ F

3. \_\_\_\_\_ A

\_\_\_\_\_ B

\_\_\_\_\_ C

\_\_\_\_\_ D

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Three Mickey Mouse Questions**  
**Answer Card**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ A

\_\_\_\_\_ B

\_\_\_\_\_ C

\_\_\_\_\_ D

\_\_\_\_\_ E

\_\_\_\_\_ F

3. \_\_\_\_\_ A

\_\_\_\_\_ B

\_\_\_\_\_ C

\_\_\_\_\_ D

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Shark Survival**  
**Answer Card**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ A

\_\_\_\_\_ B

\_\_\_\_\_ C

\_\_\_\_\_ D

\_\_\_\_\_ E

\_\_\_\_\_ F

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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