

19 One Angry Mother

The plump mother hippo might look sweet, but when she gets mad, even lions run. When calm, her wide, upturned lips seem to smile, and her short legs give her a cute waddle. When angered, though, she can open her “smiling” jaws twice as wide as her head and reveal teeth like knives. And even with short legs, she gallops as fast as a horse. A lion near her calf is in for a shock when the hippo bellows and charges.

What is the main idea of this story?

Why do you think a lion runs when the hippo charges?

What do you think would happen if the lion did not run off?

Why do you think the lion might be near the hippo *calf*? Do you think lions hunt adult hippos? Why or why not?

Why do you think the hippo might need teeth like knives?

Why might it seem shocking that the hippo can run so fast?

Some people say the hippo is the most feared animal in Africa. Why do you think people might fear her?



39 The Sweetest Cobra

A bug-eating plant called the cobra lily does not have to move to kill its prey. This plant has leaves that hang like a forked tongue from the "head" part of its stem. When a fly lands on the "tongue," which is wet with nectar, he finds a small hole into the plant's head. He finds more sweet juice inside, but once he eats his fill, he cannot find his way out. Sunlight glows through the thin wall at the top of the plant's head. Thinking the daylight will lead him out, the confused fly buzzes back and forth in the head for hours. In time, the fly tires and falls down the plant's slick tube stem, lands in a pool of deadly liquid, and gets turned to mush.

What is the main idea of this story?

What do you think the cobra lily will do with the liquid fly mush?

Why do you think this lily is called the *cobra* lily?

Why do you think the fly lands on the lily's "tongue"?

Why do you think the fly buzzes back and forth in the head?

What do you think would happen if the top of the head did not have such a thin wall?



26 A Little Help in Port

With their strong engines and soft bumpers, small, stout tugboats help huge freight ships squeeze in and out of port. Freight ships can be as long as three football fields, stacked with crates, or filled with tanks of oil. They cut swiftly through the waves at sea, but they are hard to turn and stop. When they near a crowded harbor, they shut down their engines and wait for the tugboats. A few tugs motor out to a waiting ship and their crews tie up to the ship with strong ropes. Then the tugs pull and nudge the ship through the harbor and bring it gently to the dock.

What is the main idea of this story?

What do you think might happen if a freight ship tried to motor into the harbor on its own?

Why do you think they don't just make freight ships small enough for the harbors?

What do you think is the most important part of the tug? Why? Why do you think the tugboats need soft bumpers?

27 A Handy Tail

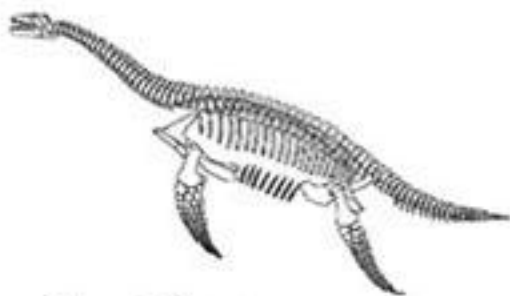
The spider monkey spends most of his life clinging to branches high in the rainforest trees. Here, he swings from branch to branch with his long skinny arms. He can also use his feet as hands and grab onto branches when he climbs. His fifth "hand" is his long, flexible tail. To speed through the trees, he can wrap the end of his tail around a branch and swing from it, letting go to catch the next branch with a hand. He can also use his tail to pick fruit. Or he can simply hang by his tail from a branch, like a spider dangling from a web, and reach for his food.

What is the main idea of this story?

Why do you think he is called the *spider* monkey?

Why do you think it is good for him to have so many "hands"?

How does his tail act like another hand?



47 Deep Sea Dino

When dinosaurs roamed the Earth, a strange-looking beast called a *plesiosaur* lurked in the deep seas. This huge monster had a thick body and a short tail. She swam with four flippers, each the size of a man. Her long, skinny neck stretched out twenty feet, as long as the rest of her body. At the end of her neck sat a small head and strong jaws lined with sharp teeth.

The plesiosaur used her long neck to ambush large fish that swam in schools. When she spotted a school of fish, she slowly swam up behind the school. With her large body hidden far back in the murky water, she nosed her small head in among the fish. Acting just like part of the school, she eased her head up next to one of the fish. She suddenly opened her jaws, jerked her head to the side, and clamped down on her stunned prey. The rest of the fish scattered while she gulped down her meal.

What is the main idea of this story?

Why do you think the story calls the plesiosaur a “monster”?

Do you think a monster of this size would have to eat a lot of fish, or just a few? Explain.

How do you think her long neck helped her hunt?

Why do you think she swam up to the school *slowly* and didn’t just rush right in?

Why do you think the fish did not notice her head in the school?

What do you think would have happened if the plesiosaur hunted in bright, clear water?