Honey to the Bee

Bees are flying insects that feed on nectar and pollen. They are usually yellow and black and covered in fuzzy hair that makes collecting pollen easier. A bee’s body is similar to that of other insects—for instance, an ant—with three major sections: the head, the middle section called the thorax, and the last section called the abdomen. The head of a bee has five eyes for seeing and two antennae for touching and smelling. Two sets of wings and three sets of legs can be found on a bee’s thorax. Depending on the type of bee, the last set of legs might have little sacs that store the pollen that the bee has collected from flowers. Many types of bees have stingers. The bee stinger is the most feared part of a bee, and for good reason. Filled with poison, the stinger is a bee’s protection from danger. The stingers are around 12 millimeters long. There are over 20,000 known bee species in the world. The best known is probably the honeybee.

Honeybees live in beehives, which have a distinct order that helps things run smoothly. At the bottom of the totem pole are the workers. Workers are young female bees. Some of their main duties include going out to find food (nectar and pollen), building the hive, and keeping it clean. Honeybees will travel up to eight miles if necessary to find nectar and pollen to bring back to the hive. Worker bees are actually the only bees that ever do any stinging. When this does happen, it is usually because they are trying to protect their hive from harm. A bee rarely stings when it is away from the hive, but it might sting if it senses danger. The lifespan of a worker bee is anywhere from 4 to 9 months.

The queen honeybee is the biggest bee in the hive. There is usually only one per hive, and her job is to grow the family by laying eggs that will become the next generation of honeybees. She lays over a thousand eggs per day and can live anywhere from 3 to 5 years. When the time
comes for a new queen to take over, some larvae are placed in special chambers to grow queen bees. After they hatch, they are fattened up with royal jelly, a nutritious substance that worker bees secrete. It usually takes about two weeks for a newly hatched female bee to grow into a queen bee. The first female bee to become a queen bee kills the other potential queen bees.

Male honeybees are called drones. They don’t have stingers, and they don’t collect nectar or pollen. Their only purpose is to mate with the queen. Several hundred drones can live in a hive at one time. As the winter months approach, the males are kicked out of the hive in order to make it easier for the queen and her workers to survive. Food needs to be saved as there are fewer flowers to collect pollen and nectar from. Less food means the drones are the first ones to go!
1. What is a bee?
   A  an insect that lives near water and eats fish
   B  a red-and-black insect that lives under the ground
   C  a flying insect that collects nectar and pollen
   D  a crawling insect with two sets of legs and no wings

2. What does this passage describe?
   A  wings, legs, mouths, and trees
   B  totem poles and winter weather
   C  different honeybees in a beehive
   D  poison and measurement

3. Different bees in a hive have different duties.
   What evidence from the passage supports this statement?
   A  Worker bees gather food; the queen bee lays eggs.
   B  Bee stingers are about 12 millimeters long.
   C  Bees have two sets of wings and three sets of legs.
   D  The honeybee is probably the best known bee species.

4. Which bees are probably the least important bees in a beehive?
   A  worker bees
   B  the queen bee
   C  female bees
   D  drones

5. What is this passage mainly about?
   A  the lives of bees
   B  the bodies of bees
   C  different types of insects
   D  antennae and wings
6. Read the following sentences: “There are over 20,000 known bee species in the world. The best known is probably the honeybee.”

What does the word “species” most nearly mean in the sentences above?

A colors or shades
B orders or levels
C kinds or types
D duties or jobs

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

There is less food available for the honeybees in the hive during the winter; ________, the drones are kicked out.

A never
B even though
C including
D consequently

8. What does a bee look like, according to the text?

____________________________________________________________________
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____________________________________________________________________
9. What are the main duties of worker bees?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

10. Drones are the first bees to be kicked out of a beehive as the winter months approach. Why might this be? Make sure to consider the role of the drone in the beehive. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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8. What does a bee look like, according to the text?

**Suggested answer:** Answers may vary, but students should identify at least one feature described in the passage. Bees are described as usually black-and-yellow insects with fuzzy hair, bodies with three major sections, two sets of wings, three sets of legs, five eyes, two antennae, and a stinger (unless they’re a drone).

9. What are the main duties of worker bees?

**Suggested answer:** The main duties of worker bees are gathering food, building the hive, and keeping the hive clean.

10. Drones are the first bees to be kicked out of a beehive as the winter months approach. Why might this be? Make sure to consider the role of the drone in the beehive. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Suggested answer:** Answers may vary and should be supported by the text. Students should indicate that other than mating with the queen bee, the drones do not contribute as much to the beehive as the other bees. Thus, they are the least valuable to the well-being of the beehive and the first to be kicked out.