Looks Good! Tastes Bad!

Words you'll need to know

attraction appeal or lure
emerges comes out of
germinate start to grow or sprout
larvae a butterfly's caterpillar stage
predators animals that live by killing and feeding on other animals
remarkable outstanding
struts walk proudly; showoff

In some ways, animals are like people. They seem to prefer pretty objects to ugly things. They are attracted more to things that are bright and colorful than to those that are dull and colorless.

This **attraction** to beauty can be good. Colorful flowers attract bees. Bees get nectar from the flowers with which they make honey. While collecting nectar, the bees bring pollen from other flowers. This pollen is needed for flower seeds to **germinate** and produce more flowers. In this case both the flowers and the bees benefit. The flowers' bright colors benefits both the flowers and the bees.

Many male birds use their bright colors to attract female mates. It would be hard for a female peacock to turn down an interested male when he **struts** in front of her in full color. If he were dull and drab, the female might just ignore him. Again color is helpful, not harmful, in achieving a goal.

In some cases attraction to beauty can be bad. Certain bright colors may attract mosquitoes and other nasty bugs. It might be helpful to find out what these colors are before you go on your next picnic. Bright colors also attract predators. Creatures that are colorful are more likely to be eaten than those that are not.

One insect that is very colorful but has developed a defense against **predators** is the monarch butterfly. It looks good but tastes terrible. When monarchs are in their larvae stage, they feed on milkweed leaves. The poison from these leaves enters their bodies and gives them a horrible taste. The adult monarch that **emerges** from the **larvae** remains distasteful. Predator birds soon learn to leave the monarch alone.

Other than being distasteful, the monarch is a **remarkable** insect. It is beautiful. Its wings are a bright reddish-brown with black veins running throughout. Black borders surround the wings and each contains two rows of white dots. Its wingspread is about 4 inches. Its territory covers most of the United States and Mexico.

Each fall, the monarchs migrate from North America to Mexico. This journey covers a distance of 1,800 miles through fierce storms, blistering heat, and floods. It is hard to believe that an insect that weighs only a tiny fraction of an ounce can survive such a trip.

In early spring, the monarchs begin their return trip to North America. They stop along the way to lay their eggs on milkweed leaves. Soon after laying their eggs the adult monarchs die. The young that hatch from these eggs continue the journey north. They return to the same regions where their parents lived. Scientists have no idea how these young monarchs can find their way to their parent's former home. It is still one of the world's unsolved mysteries.

Questions and Discussion

1. A well-chosen title can serve as a brief summary of the article. Select the best title from the following list:

   _____ a. People Are Like Animals

   _____ b. The Monarch's Travels

   _____ c. A Remarkable Insect

   _____ d. Color Is Not Always Good

2. Which two sentences could serve as topic sentences for the sixth paragraph?

   _____ a. Each fall, the monarchs migrate from North America to Mexico.

   _____ b. This journey covers a distance of 1800 miles.

   _____ c. Other than being distasteful, the monarch is a remarkable insect.

   _____ d. In some ways animals are like people.

3. Write a one-sentence summary of paragraph 3. Write your summary on the lines below.

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Circle T if the statement is true. Circle F if the statement is false.

   T F a. The first sentence is always the topic sentence.

   T F b. The writer rambled in paragraph two.

   T F c. "It is beautiful" is the topic sentence of paragraph five.

   T F d. "It looks good but tastes terrible" is the topic sentence of paragraph four.

   T F e. The monarch is described in paragraph five.

   T F f. The monarch is mentioned in four paragraphs.

   T F g. All monarchs return to the place they were born.

5. All but a few higher-order animals are color-blind. How can they be attracted to colors? Write your answer on the lines below.

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   _____

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To search the Web for more information, use the following key words or phrases:

Monarch butterfly