

LESSON 13 • OUTLINING & READING SKILLS

SELECTING MAIN IDEAS OF PARAGRAPHS (CONTINUED)

Textbook Page 13

Animal Science Insights & Main Ideas: Expository paragraphs often explain the *real reason* behind an animal's unique behavior or debunk common myths.

Directions: Read each paragraph below. Choose the title that best covers the entire paragraph. **Circle the letter** (a, b, or c) of the correct title.

PARAGRAPH 4

Zoology • Raccoon Anatomy

Have you ever watched a raccoon eat? If you have seen one anywhere near water, you would think it was washing food. Oftentimes the raccoon soaked it before eating. Therefore, people think a raccoon is a very clean animal. Perhaps it is clean, but there is a better reason for washing food. A raccoon has a small throat, and it is much easier to swallow soft food. When a raccoon finds a piece of soft, mushy fruit, it eats it without soaking it first.

- ☐ a Eating habits of the raccoon
- ☐ b The cleanest animal of all
- ☐ c Why raccoons wash their food

PARAGRAPH 5

Zoology • Porcupine Defense Mechanisms

Are porcupines dangerous? Will they really shoot a person or an animal full of quills? Porcupines are really friendly little animals unless they are bothered. Then the porcupines will arch their backs so the quills stand on end. They back up to the enemy and lash out with their tails so the quills land in the enemy's head. Because the quills have barbs which open in the flesh, they must be cut out. Porcupines do not "shoot their quills"; but will use them in self-defense.

- ☐ a Porcupines are friendly animals
- ☐ b Porcupines shoot their quills
- ☐ c How porcupines protect themselves

PARAGRAPH 6

Entomology • Amazon Ants Social Structure

One family of ants, known as the Amazon ants, must capture slaves to do their work. They could not live otherwise. The Amazon ants have sharp jaws which are good for fighting. They must be fed by little black slave ants. Also they need the slaves to do their digging. Slaves also do their building.

- ☐ a Amazon ants have sharp jaws
- ☐ b Slave ants
- ☐ c How ants are fed



Inspector Frog's Tip: Don't get fooled by common myths or single facts! In Paragraph 5, porcupines do *not* shoot quills, so title (b) is false. Always verify that the title fits what the author actually proves!

LESSON 13: SELECTING MAIN IDEAS (CONTINUED)

Full Score: 3 Points

Pedagogical Purpose & Expository Fact-Checking:

In Lesson 13, students evaluate paragraphs that present *cause-and-effect explanations* and *myth-busting facts*. Students must avoid two major cognitive traps: selecting popular misconceptions refuted by the passage, and selecting single anatomical features rather than the overarching behavioral purpose.

4. Paragraph 4: Raccoon Food Soaking**Correct Title: c****✓ c. Why raccoons wash their food**

[CORRECT] Synthesizes the central inquiry: explains that while people assume cleanliness, the real biological reason is lubricating food for their narrow throats (soft fruit is eaten unwashed).

[DISTRACTOR a - Too Broad] "Eating habits of the raccoon" — Overly broad; would encompass what raccoons eat (scavenging, hunting, berries) rather than the specific habit of wetting food.

[DISTRACTOR b - Factually Misleading] "The cleanest animal of all" — Directly challenged by the text: the author explains cleanliness is merely an illusion, not the primary cause.

5. Paragraph 5: Porcupine Quills & Self-Defense**Correct Title: c****✓ c. How porcupines protect themselves**

[CORRECT] Unifies the entire passage: details the physical sequence of defense (arching backs, standing quills, tail lashing) and clarifies that quills are purely defensive.

[DISTRACTOR a - Contradicted / Too Narrow] "Porcupines are friendly animals" — Merely an introductory transition; the passage quickly shifts to their dangerous barbed quill defense when threatened.

[DISTRACTOR b - Factually False] "Porcupines shoot their quills" — Explicitly refuted in the text: "Porcupines do not 'shoot their quills'; but will use them in self-defense."

6. Paragraph 6: Amazon Ants and Slave Workers**Correct Title: b****✓ b. Slave ants**

[CORRECT] Encompasses the entire social dependency: Amazon ants cannot survive without captured slaves, who perform all essential survival functions (feeding, digging, building).

[DISTRACTOR a - Too Narrow] "Amazon ants have sharp jaws" — Just one physical detail explaining why they are suited for combat rather than domestic colony labor.

[DISTRACTOR c - Too Narrow] "How ants are fed" — Only covers one specific duty; overlooks the slave ants' crucial roles in excavation and construction.

Diagnostic Evaluation: Identifying Expository Traps

Trap Category	Student Manifestation	Guided Teacher Question
The Myth / Folk Belief Trap	Selecting titles based on popular myth rather than the author's debunking (e.g., Q4 b, Q5 b).	"Does the author agree with this idea, or is the author explaining that this common belief is actually wrong?"
The Single Duty Trap	Focusing on one dramatic task (e.g., How ants are fed) instead of the comprehensive role.	"What other jobs do the slave ants do besides feeding? What title includes digging and building too?"
The Anatomical Detail Trap	Fixating on physical body parts (e.g., sharp jaws) instead of the ecological function.	"Why does the author tell us about sharp jaws? Does that explain why they need slave ants?"