

Name: _____

Seeing Red

by Katrina DeLallo



See that red bug crawling up that leaf? That's a ladybug.

Why do we call ladybugs **ladybugs**? After all, there are men ladybugs, too.

In the Middle Ages, nasty insects were destroying the farmers' crops. When the Catholic farmers prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary (who is sometimes called "Our Lady"), asking her to get rid of the bad insects, she sent an army of red and black beetles that devoured all the bad insects. In gratitude, the farmers called these plant protectors "Beetles of Our Lady." Eventually the name shortened to Lady Beetles.

Scientists call Ladybugs *Coccinellidae* (cock-si-nel-li-dee), which means "little red sphere."

Ladybugs are about the same size as a pencil eraser, oval-shaped and red. But you know what? Not all ladybugs are red. Other common ladybug colors are yellow and orange. Some ladybugs come in more unusual colors, like pink, black, and white.

Do you know why ladybugs are so brightly-colored? It's because they are a little bit poisonous. Most vividly marked animals, like bees, are usually poisonous to some degree... think of the bee's stinger! If a ladybug is attacked it will ooze a yellow, bad-smelling, nasty-tasting liquid from its leg joints and the poison it gives out is enough to make a bird very sick! In fact, the next time you find a ladybug, pick it up and sniff it. Smell that faint, bitter odor? That's the ladybug's poison that smells.

Ladybugs are related to crustaceous (kruh-stey-shuhs) animals like lobsters. Isn't that weird, that ladybugs and lobsters are sort of like cousins? That's because lobsters and ladybugs are both classified as *arthropods* (ahr-thruh-pod), which are creatures with jointed legs. If you look closely you can see that a ladybug's legs are indeed jointed. A magnifying glass might help you in this experiment.

Want to know something else? Ladybugs aren't just bugs... they're are a type of beetle.

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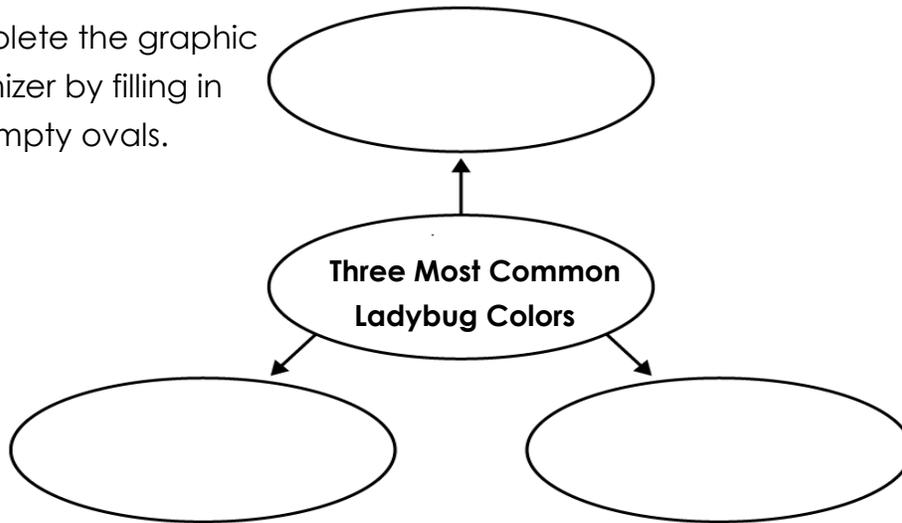
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1. How did ladybugs get their name?

- a. They ate farmers' crops in the Middle Ages, so farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary for them to go away.
- b. In the Middle Ages, ladybugs reminded farmers of the Virgin Mary, known as "Our Lady."
- c. In the Middle Ages, farmers prayed to the Virgin Mary to get rid of pests, and ladybugs appeared.
- d. All ladybugs are female insects.

2. Complete the graphic organizer by filling in the empty ovals.



3. What do all arthropods have in common?

4. How are ladybugs and bees alike?

- a. They both have stingers.
- b. They are both slightly poisonous.
- c. They both eat smaller bugs.
- d. They are both a type of beetle

ANSWER KEY

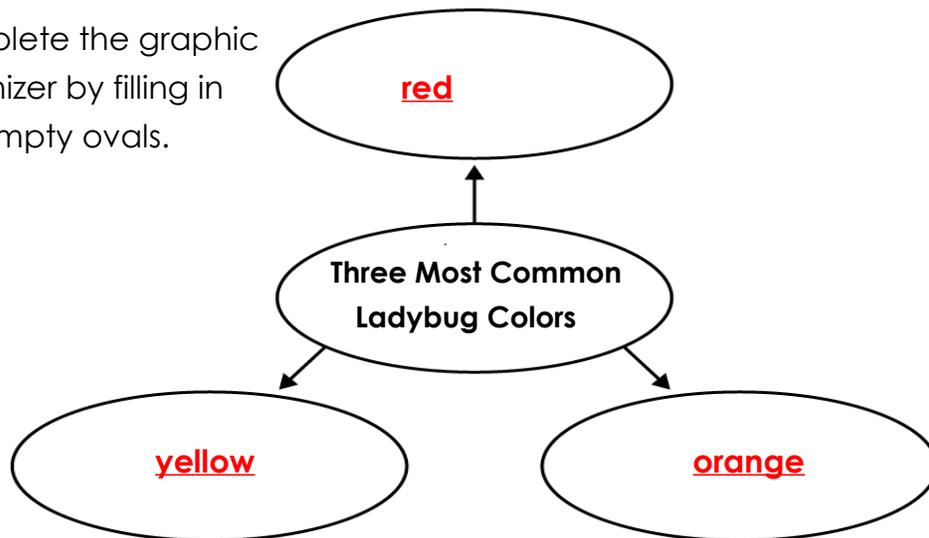
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