

Name: _____

Stick Insects

by Guy Belleranti



Some insects have bodies that look just like the twigs on the plants they eat. These creatures are called stick insects. Often called walking sticks or stick bugs, they live on every continent except Antarctica.

While most stick insects are brown, some are green, gray, black, blue, or even multi-colored. They can be smaller than an inch or longer than a 12 inch ruler. One

species in Asia is more than 20 inches long with its legs stretched out!



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the following tactics stick bugs use to defend themselves:

Some stick insects can pinch or hit attackers with their spiny legs. Others spray substances that burn an attacker's eyes. And some just taste bad. The Peruvian firestick is one of the bad-tasting ones. This stick insect is easier to see than others because it has red, yellow, and black markings. These bright colors are a warning to predators, who know the Peruvian firestick discharges a stinky white substance when attacked.

Stick insects are mostly nocturnal. This means they are active at night, when they spend their time eating leaves. Darkness makes it harder for most predators to see them. However, darkness doesn't protect stick insects from one super set of bug hunters, insect-eating bats. These bats use echolocation to find yummy bug dinners. And stick insects are definitely on the menu as something these bats want to eat!

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1. According to the information in the article, why are insect-eating bats a major predator of stick bugs?
 - a. Bats don't need to see well in order to hunt stick insects.
 - b. Bats can taste the scent of stick insects in the air when they fly.
 - c. Bats use echolocation to find stick insects in the dark.
 - d. Both a and c
2. What do stick insects eat?
 - a. aphids
 - b. sticks



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4. Using the information from the article, write a sentence to describe how Peruvian firesticks and skunks are similar in the way they defend themselves from predators.

5. Which of the following choices would **not** be an accurate description of a stick insect?
 - a. A stick insect can be as long as 20 inches (50.8 cm).
 - b. A stick insect can be found near the South Pole.
 - c. A stick insect can be blue.
 - d. A stick insect can stay awake all night.

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The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. _____ echolocation | a. small woody shoots that grow out of branches on trees and shrubs |
| 2. _____ camouflage | b. unique identification marks on an animal's body |
| 3. _____ Peruvian | c. possible situations that might occur |



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- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 6. _____ nocturnal | f. moving rhythmically back and forth |
| 7. _____ twigs | g. movement |
| 8. _____ swaying | h. an animal's natural markings or shape that enables it to blend in with its surroundings |
| 9. _____ scenarios | i. active at night |
| 10. _____ motion | j. an animal that hunts other animals for food |

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In the article, "Stick Insects," you learned that stick insects use a wide variety of defense tactics to protect themselves against predators.

On the lines below, choose one of the defense tactics discussed in the article, and compare it with another insect or animal that uses a similar defense tactic against its predators. (**Note:** You may not compare a stick insect with a skunk because you have already done so in the short answer section.)



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ANSWER KEY

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1. According to the information in the article, why are insect-eating bats a major predator of stick bugs? **d.**

a. Bats don't need to see well in order to hunt stick insects.

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c. A stick insect can be blue.

d. A stick insect can stay awake all night.

ANSWER KEY

Stick Insects

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The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

1. d. echolocation a. small woody shoots that grow out of branches on trees and shrubs

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10. g. motion j. an animal that hunts other animals for food

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