

Read the short story. Then answer each question.

The Hunters and The Hunted

The insect world includes thousands of kinds of dragonflies. They come in pretty colors like red, blue, and green. Some of them have spots or stripes marking their wings. Darting through the garden, they may not look like fierce hunters, but they are. Studies show them as one of the most lethal hunters on Earth.



Dragonflies feed on smaller bugs such as moths, flies, and mosquitoes. They grab their prey with their feet while in flight. This means they need to be fast. In fact, these acrobats rank as the fastest of all flying insects. A dragonfly in hot pursuit of a meal reaches speeds of up to 35 miles per hour. They catch over 90% of the prey that they target.

Bugs beware! The dragonfly's skills include more than speed. Their eyes are made of thousands of tiny lenses that take up most of the space on their head. These lenses give them super sight. They can see in almost all directions, and nature finely tuned their eyes and brains to spot and track motion. Dragonflies can see a meal coming from almost anywhere. The only blind spot for a bug to hide in is right behind a dragonfly.

This insect hunter has a big appetite. One dragonfly eats up to a hundred mosquitoes in a day. That alone makes them a welcome garden guest. They do not need to waste time coming in for a landing to eat either. They wolf down their meals while still in flight.

A dragonfly needs to be quick for more than hunting. While they cruise for prey, others look to prey on them. Barn swallows dine on a buffet of bugs, from bees to beetles. They can reach 45 miles per hour which makes them fast enough to add dragonflies to their menu. Barn swallows eat up to 850 bugs a day. Just like dragonflies, they eat while in flight.

Swallows need to be quick to stay alive too. While they fill their bellies with bugs, birds of prey look to fill their talons. Barn swallows find themselves on the menu for raptors, like the Cooper's hawk.



Cooper's hawks look like the fierce hunters that they are. They do not catch their prey as often as a dragonfly, but that is alright. Just one of the birds or small animals they hunt will keep them satisfied for the day. A dragonfly would not last long on one mosquito!

Exercises:

1. Fill in the blanks.

a. Dragonflies use their _____ to catch their prey.

b. Dragonflies feed on smaller bugs such as _____, _____, and _____.

c. Thousands of tiny _____ take up most of the space on the dragonfly's head giving them super _____.

d. Barn swallows dine on bugs like _____ and _____.

2. True or False

| | | |
|--|------|-------|
| Some dragonflies have spots or stripes on their wings. | True | False |
| Dragonflies are the slowest of all flying insects. | True | False |
| Dragonflies can see in almost all directions. | True | False |

| | | |
|---|------|-------|
| Dragonflies have a big appetite. | True | False |
| Barn swallows eat more than 1,000 bugs a day. | True | False |
| The Cooper's hawk is a type of raptor. | True | False |

3. Mosquitoes, dragonflies, swallows, and hawks are all part of a food chain. Can you think of another food chain?

Answers:

1. Fill in the blanks.
 - a. Dragonflies use their feet to catch their prey
 - b. Dragonflies feed on smaller bugs such as moths, flies, and mosquitoes.
 - c. Thousands of tiny lenses take up most of the space on the dragonfly's head giving them super sight.
 - d. Barn swallows dine on bugs like bees and beetles.

2. True or False

| | | |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| Some dragonflies have spots or stripes on their wings. | <u>True</u> | False |
| Dragonflies are the slowest of all flying insects. | True | <u>False</u> |
| Dragonflies can see in almost all directions. | <u>True</u> | False |
| Dragonflies have a big appetite. | <u>True</u> | False |
| Barn swallows eat more than 1,000 bugs a day. | True | <u>False</u> |
| The Cooper's hawk is a type of raptor. | <u>True</u> | False |

3. Answers will vary.