The Mighty Monarch

Grade 3

Name _____ Date _____

Remember: Read the passage **twice**: once to enjoy it, and once to look for details. Then answer the questions. Look back at the text to **prove** your answers.

Leveled reading: this passage is written at guided reading level O, a typical level for Grade 3. Read it aloud once, then read it again silently.

The Mighty Monarch



Monarch butterflies are easy to spot. Their wings are bright orange with black lines and white dots. Those bright colours are a warning sign to birds: "Don't eat me!"

The warning is true. Monarch caterpillars eat only milkweed plants. Milkweed contains a bitter, poisonous juice. It doesn't hurt the caterpillar, but it stays in the monarch's body and makes it taste terrible. A bird that eats one usually spits it out and learns to leave monarchs alone.

Monarchs are also famous for their amazing journey. Every fall, monarchs from eastern Canada and the United States fly south to the mountains of central Mexico. Some fly more than 4,000 kilometres, about as far as driving across the whole country.

In Mexico, millions of monarchs gather in fir forests high in the mountains. They cluster so tightly on the branches that the trees look orange. The cool mountain air lets them rest through the winter without using up their energy.

In spring, the monarchs begin flying north again. Along the way, they lay eggs on milkweed plants. It takes three or four generations of butterflies to complete the trip back north.

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1. Check your understanding

Circle the best answer.

1. Why are monarchs brightly coloured?

(a) To attract flowers
(b) To warn birds they taste bad
(c) To keep warm

2. What do monarch caterpillars eat?

(a) Only milkweed
(b) Grass
(c) Other insects

3. Where do eastern monarchs spend the winter?

(a) In the mountains of central Mexico
(b) In Antarctica
(c) In Canada

4. How many generations does the trip north take?

(a) One
(b) Three or four
(c) Ten

2. Write your answer

Answer in complete sentences. Use details from the text.

1. **Explain why birds learn to leave monarchs alone.**

2. **Why do monarchs choose cool mountain forests in winter?**

3. **What is the main idea of this passage?**

Answer Key

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1. Check your understanding

1. Why are monarchs brightly coloured?

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- **b. To warn birds they taste bad**
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2. Write your answer

Sample answers. Students' wording will vary.

1. **Explain why birds learn to leave monarchs alone.**
   Monarchs eat milkweed, which makes them taste terrible, so birds spit them out and remember not to eat them again.
2. **Why do monarchs choose cool mountain forests in winter?**
   The cool air lets them rest through the winter without using up their energy.
3. **What is the main idea of this passage?**
   Monarch butterflies have special ways to stay safe and make an amazing long journey every year.