How Honeybees Make Honey

Grade 3 reading · nonfiction passage

Name: Date: Score: / 11



How Honeybees Make Honey

1 A honeybee leaves the hive looking for one thing: nectar. Nectar is the sweet liquid that flowers make deep inside their petals. On a single trip a worker bee may visit between fifty and a hundred flowers before she turns for home.

2 She does not carry the nectar in her mouth. A honeybee has a special stomach that she uses only for carrying, so the nectar never mixes with her food. When it is full, she flies back to the hive.

3 At the hive she passes the nectar to a house bee, and that is where the real work starts. Nectar is mostly water. The house bees spread it into the comb and fan their wings over it, hour after hour, until most of the water has dried away. What is left behind is thick and golden: honey.

4 Then the cell is sealed. The bees cover the top with a lid of wax, the way you would put a lid on a jar, and the honey will keep for a very long time underneath it.

5 Look closely at a honeycomb and you will see that every cell has six sides. Six-sided cells fit together with no gaps between them, so the bees get the most space for the least wax. It takes about two million flower visits to make one pound of honey — and one worker bee makes only about a twelfth of a teaspoon in her whole life.

Answer the questions using the passage. Every answer is somewhere in the text.

1. Where does a honeybee keep the nectar while she flies? *(paragraph 2)*

2. Why do the house bees fan their wings over the nectar? *(paragraph 3)*

3. About how many flower visits does it take to make one pound of honey? Circle one letter.

a about two thousand
b about twenty thousand
c about two million
d about two billion

4. Why are honeycomb cells six-sided? *(paragraph 5)*

5. What do the bees do once the honey is ready?

6. Which paragraph explains how the honey is stored? Write the number.

1 2 3 4 5

7. The passage says nectar is “mostly water.” How does that help explain why honey is thick?

8. Write one fact you learned from this passage, in your own words.

Word work. Find the word in the passage that matches each meaning.

1. the sweet liquid inside a flower *(paragraph 1)*

2. closed up so nothing can get in or out *(paragraph 4)*

3. the waxy block of six-sided cells that bees build *(paragraph 5)*

How Honeybees Make Honey — Answer Key

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1. Where does a honeybee keep the nectar while she flies? **In a special stomach that she uses only for carrying, so it never mixes with her food.**
2. Why do the house bees fan their wings over the nectar? **To dry the water out of it. Nectar is mostly water, and fanning it makes the water go away until what is left is thick honey.**
3. About how many flower visits does it take to make one pound of honey? **c — about two million**
4. Why are honeycomb cells six-sided? **Six-sided cells fit together with no gaps, so the bees get the most space while using the least wax.**
5. What do the bees do once the honey is ready? **They seal the cell with a lid of wax, like putting a lid on a jar, so the honey keeps.**
6. Which paragraph explains how the honey is stored? **Paragraph 4.** (Accept 4 and 5 together if the student points to the wax lid in 4 and the shape of the cells in 5.)
7. The passage says nectar is “mostly water.” How does that help explain why honey is thick? **Because the water is taken out. Once most of the water has dried away, what is left is much thicker than the nectar the bee brought home.**
8. One fact you learned. **Answers vary.** Accept any fact actually stated in the passage, written in the student’s own words.

Word work

1. the sweet liquid inside a flower — **nectar**
2. closed up so nothing can get in or out — **sealed**
3. the waxy block of six-sided cells bees build — **honeycomb** (accept **comb**)

> Question 7 is the one that separates reading from remembering. The passage never says “honey is thick because the water is removed” in those words — the student has to join “nectar is mostly water” in paragraph 3 to “most of the water has dried away” two sentences later. If a child is stuck, read those two sentences aloud, one after the other, and ask nothing else.