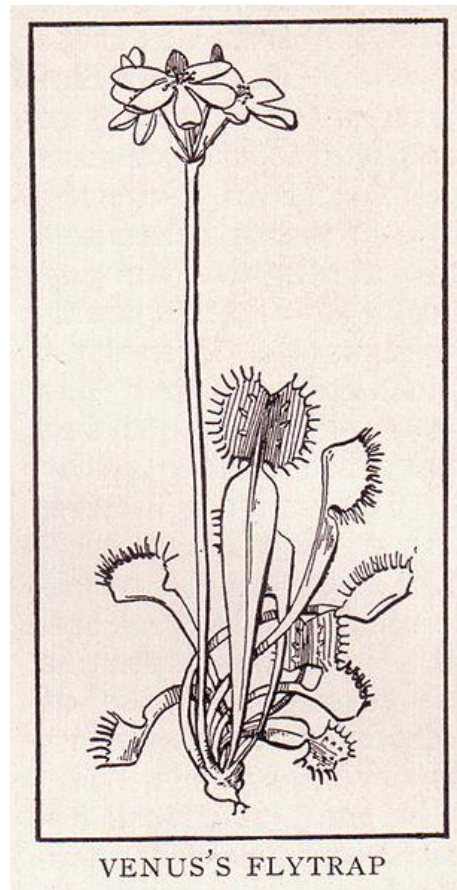


The Venus Flytrap



The Venus flytrap is an insect-eating plant that lives mostly on the East Coast. Found primarily in swampy parts of the United States, like North and South Carolina, the Venus flytrap has colorful pink and green hues. Like most other plants, Venus flytraps get some nutrients from the soil, but since swampy areas tend to have soil that is nutrient-poor, it is hard for the plant to get nutrients from there. As a result, the flytrap has evolved to not only rely on the soil to survive. The Venus flytrap is a carnivorous plant because it catches insects and eats them to get the nutrients that it can't get from the soil.

The Venus flytrap has leaves that open to catch prey and then snap shut once it's ready to eat. On the inside of each leaf there are short, stiff hairs called trigger hairs. When an insect touches one of the three trigger hairs on either side of the leaf twice in a row, it signals to the flytrap that dinner is here. The leaves then snap shut, trapping the insect inside. Of course,

some insects are able to escape, but many don't. And if they try and struggle to get out, the trap closes even tighter! The trap doesn't close all the way, though. It stays open for a few seconds, so smaller insects that might be trapped inside with the main meal can crawl out. Venus flytraps don't like to eat small insects because they don't provide a lot of nutritional value. If it's not an insect that is trapped, rather a nut or a stone, the trap will open after about 12 hours and spit it out. The inside of a flytrap has fingerlike tentacles that help keep the insect from escaping. If you fold your hands together and lace your fingers on the inside, you'll get an idea of what the trap looks like.

In order to digest or eat the insect, the flytrap must squeeze its prey very tightly, as digestive juices dissolve the inside of the insect. At the end of this process, which takes anywhere from 5 to 12 days, the trap opens up again, and either rain or wind will carry the insect's remaining exoskeleton away. If the flytrap has caught an insect that is too big, and, say, the legs of the bug are sticking out of the trap, the digestion process might not happen the way it should. The trap will grow mold and once that happens, it will continue to get sicker and sicker, with the trap eventually turning black and falling off.

The exact amount of time it takes for the trap to open back up again depends on a variety of factors. These factors include the size of the insect, temperature, how old the trap is, and how many times the plant has gone through this process. In fact, the trap can only catch about three of its prey before it turns black, dies, and falls off. The trap can only open and close about seven times; that is why it is important to not go around touching the trap in order to get them to close. So if you ever see one, don't tease it!

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is the Venus flytrap?

- A a plant-eating insect
- B an insect-eating plant
- C swampy, nutrient-poor soil
- D a plant that grows on Venus

2. What does the author describe in the passage?

- A the species of insects the Venus flytrap eats
- B plants that are similar to the Venus flytrap
- C the swampy regions of North and South Carolina
- D how the Venus flytrap catches and eats its prey

3. The trap of the Venus flytrap may not last long. What evidence from the passage supports this conclusion?

- A The trap opens up again 5-12 days after catching and eating an insect.
- B The trap stays open for a few seconds so that smaller insects can crawl out.
- C The trap must squeeze the prey very tightly in order to digest or eat the insect.
- D The trap can only catch about three of its prey before it dies and falls off.

4. What was the Venus flytrap forced to adapt to?

- A an environment without any other plants
- B an environment with nutrient-rich soil
- C an environment without nutrient-rich soil
- D an environment without any large animals

5. What is the passage mainly about?

- A different types of carnivorous plants that live in swamps
- B the Venus flytrap and how it catches its prey
- C the swampy areas where the Venus flytrap lives
- D why the trap of the Venus flytrap turns black and fall off

6. Read the following sentence: "The inside of a flytrap has fingerlike **tentacles** that help keep the insect from escaping."

The author compares **tentacles** to what?

- A insects
- B flytraps
- C insects
- D fingers

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

The Venus flytrap cannot get enough nutrients from the soil in which it grows. _____, the Venus flytrap evolved to get nutrients from an additional source.

- A Finally
- B Moreover
- C Although
- D Consequently

8. Where does the Venus flytrap get its nutrients?

9. Describe the process by which the Venus flytrap catches and digests its prey.

10. How has the trap of the Venus flytrap helped this plant to survive?

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 1200

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8. Where does the Venus flytrap get its nutrients?

Suggested answer: The Venus flytrap gets its nutrients from the soil of the swampy areas where it lives and from the insects it catches and eats.

9. Describe the process by which the Venus flytrap catches and digests its prey.

Suggested answer: Answers may vary but students should explain that when an insect touches a trigger hair on one of the plant's leaves twice in a row, the leaves snap shut. In order to digest or eat the insect, the flytrap must squeeze its prey very tightly, as digestive juices dissolve the inside of the insect. At the end of this process, which takes anywhere from 5 to 12 days, the trap opens up again, and either rain or wind will carry the remaining insect's exoskeleton away.

10. How has the trap of the Venus flytrap helped this plant to survive?

Suggested answer: The trap of the Venus flytrap has helped the plant to survive by allowing it to catch another source of food which is nutritious so that it does not have to rely on the limited nutrients provided by the soil of the swampy area where it lives. Thus, the plant is able to get enough nutrients from more than one source with the help of the trap.