Name: _____ Date: _____

The Cuckoo Chick Who Gets a Free Nest

Circle group

Most birds build a nest, lay eggs and raise their chicks. The common cuckoo is different. It lets other birds do the work.

A female cuckoo watches a smaller bird build a nest. When the owner flies off, the cuckoo slips in. She lays one egg with the others. Then she leaves for good.

The trick works because the cuckoo egg often looks like the other eggs. It may be the same color. The small bird does not see the difference. It sits on all the eggs.

The cuckoo egg usually hatches first. The chick grows fast. Soon it is much bigger than its foster parents. It begs loudly. The small parents work hard to bring it food.

Some birds fight back. A few can spot an odd egg and push it out. Cuckoos keep getting better at copying eggs, and hosts keep getting better at telling them apart.

Questions

1. How does a cuckoo get another bird to raise her chick?

_____

_____

2. Why does the small bird sit on the cuckoo egg?

_____

_____

3. What happens to the cuckoo egg?

_____

_____

4. Why do the small parent birds work so hard?

_____

_____

5. What do some host birds do to fight back?

_____

_____

6. Why do cuckoos and hosts keep getting better?

_____

_____

Words to know

host: the bird whose nest is used by another bird
foster: taking care of a young one that is not your own
hatches: comes out of an egg

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Cuckoo Chick Who Gets a Free Nest

Triangle group

Most birds build a nest, lay eggs and raise their own chicks. The common cuckoo does things differently. It lets other birds do the work.

A female cuckoo watches a smaller bird, such as a reed warbler, while it builds its nest. When the owner flies off, the cuckoo slips in and lays one egg among the others. Then she leaves and never comes back. She may do this at many nests during a season.

The trick works because the cuckoo egg often looks a lot like the host's eggs. It may be about the same color and pattern. The warbler does not notice the difference and sits on all of the eggs together.

The cuckoo egg usually hatches first. The chick grows quickly and soon becomes much bigger than its foster parents. It begs loudly, and the small parents work hard to bring it enough food.

Some host birds have learned to fight back. A few can spot an odd egg and push it out, or even build a new nest. This back-and-forth has gone on for a very long time. Each time cuckoos get better at copying eggs, hosts get better at telling them apart.

Questions

1. How does a female cuckoo get another bird to raise her chick?

_____

_____

2. Why does the host bird sit on the cuckoo egg?

_____

_____

3. What happens to the cuckoo egg compared with the other eggs?

_____

_____

4. Why do the small parent birds work so hard?

_____

_____

5. What do some host birds do to fight back?

_____

_____

6. Why does the passage say cuckoos and hosts keep getting better?

_____

_____

Words to know

host: the bird whose nest is used by another bird
foster: taking care of a young one that is not your own
hatches: comes out of an egg
pattern: a design of spots, lines or shapes
season: a time of year, such as spring

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Cuckoo Chick Who Gets a Free Nest

Square group

Most birds construct a nest, lay their eggs and raise their own chicks, but the common cuckoo has adopted a remarkably different strategy. It allows other birds to do all of the work.

A female cuckoo keeps watch over a smaller bird, such as a reed warbler, while it builds its nest. When the owner flies away, the cuckoo slips in and lays a single egg among the others, then departs and never returns. In a single season she may repeat this at many nests.

The trick succeeds because a cuckoo egg frequently resembles the host's eggs, perhaps in color and in pattern. The warbler fails to notice the difference and sits on all of the eggs together.

The cuckoo egg usually hatches first. The chick grows rapidly and soon becomes far larger than its foster parents, and it begs so loudly that the tiny parents labor tirelessly to bring it enough food.

Some hosts have learned to resist. A few can recognize an unusual egg and push it out, or even abandon the nest and build another. This long contest has continued for ages: each time cuckoos improve at imitating eggs, hosts improve at telling them apart.

Questions

1. How does a female cuckoo get another bird to raise her chick?

_____

_____

2. Why does the host bird sit on the cuckoo egg?

_____

_____

3. What happens to the cuckoo egg compared with the others?

_____

_____

4. Why do the small parent birds work so tirelessly?

_____

_____

5. How do some hosts resist the cuckoo?

_____

_____

6. Why does the passage describe the contest as continuing for ages?

_____

_____

Words to know

host: the bird whose nest is used by another bird
foster: taking care of a young one that is not your own
hatches: comes out of an egg
pattern: a design of spots, lines or shapes
season: a time of year, such as spring

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Cuckoo Chick Who Gets a Free Nest

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Cuckoo Chick Who Gets a Free Nest

Easier · 149 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.3

1. She lays an egg in the bird's nest while the owner is away.
2. It looks like the bird's own eggs.
3. It usually hatches first.
4. The big chick begs loudly for food.
5. They spot the odd egg and push it out.
6. Each time cuckoos copy eggs better, hosts learn to tell them apart.

Triangle: The Cuckoo Chick Who Gets a Free Nest

This passage · 199 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4

1. She lays an egg in the other bird's nest while the owner is away.
2. The cuckoo egg often looks a lot like the host's own eggs, so the host does not notice.
3. It usually hatches first.
4. The cuckoo chick grows big and begs loudly for food.
5. They spot the odd egg and push it out, or build a new nest.
6. Each time cuckoos copy eggs more closely, hosts learn to tell them apart, so both keep improving.

Square: The Cuckoo Chick Who Gets a Free Nest

Harder · 198 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.1

1. She lays an egg in the other bird's nest while the owner is away.
2. The cuckoo egg often resembles the host's own eggs, so the host does not notice.
3. It usually hatches first.
4. The cuckoo chick grows large and begs loudly for food.
5. They recognize the unusual egg and push it out, or build another nest.
6. Each time cuckoos imitate eggs better, hosts get better at telling them apart, so both keep improving.