Name: _____ Date: _____

A Sloth's Fur Is a Tiny Garden

Circle group

Look closely at the fur of a three-toed sloth. You may see a green tint. It is not paint. It is algae, tiny plant-like living things that grow on the sloth's hair.

Sloths move very slowly. They spend most of their time hanging in trees in the rain forest. Because they hardly move, the algae have time to settle in. A sloth's hair has small grooves that hold water, so the algae have a place to grow. The rain forest is warm and wet, which the algae like.

Does the algae help the sloth? Scientists think it may. The green color can help the sloth blend in with leaves. That hides it from eagles and big cats.

Other living things share the fur too. Certain moths live there. They lay eggs in the sloth's waste. Some scientists think the moths may help to feed the algae. Others are still studying this.

A sloth is never alone. Its coat holds a whole community of small creatures.

Questions

1. What is the green tint in a sloth's fur?

_____

_____

2. Why do the algae have time to settle in?

_____

_____

3. How does a sloth's hair help the algae grow?

_____

_____

4. How might the green color help the sloth?

_____

_____

5. What other living things share the sloth's fur?

_____

_____

6. Why are scientists still studying the moths?

_____

_____

Words to know

algae: tiny plant-like living things that grow in damp places
tint: a light shade of color
settle: to come to rest and stay
grooves: small narrow channels
community: a group of living things in one place

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: _____

A Sloth's Fur Is a Tiny Garden

Triangle group

Look closely at the fur of a three-toed sloth, and you may see a green tint that is not paint at all, but algae, which are tiny plant-like living things that grow on the sloth's hair.

Sloths move extraordinarily slowly and spend most of their time hanging in the trees of the rain forest, so the algae have plenty of time to settle into the hair. The hair of a sloth has small grooves that hold water, and this gives the algae a place to grow. The rain forest is warm and wet, which is just what the algae like.

Does the algae help the sloth? Scientists think it may, because the green color can help the sloth blend into the leaves, which hides it from hungry eagles and big cats.

Even more living things share the fur. Certain kinds of moths live there, and they lay their eggs in the sloth's waste. Some scientists think the moths may help to feed the algae. Others are still studying this idea.

A sloth is never alone. Its coat holds a whole community of small creatures, and each one lives in its own way.

Questions

1. What is the green tint in a sloth's fur?

_____

_____

2. Why do the algae have time to settle in?

_____

_____

3. How does a sloth's hair help the algae grow?

_____

_____

4. How might the green color help the sloth?

_____

_____

5. What other living things share the sloth's fur?

_____

_____

6. Why does the writer say that scientists are still studying the moths?

_____

_____

Words to know

algae: tiny plant-like living things that grow in damp places
tint: a light shade of color
settle: to come to rest and stay
grooves: small narrow channels
community: a group of living things in one place

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: _____

A Sloth's Fur Is a Tiny Garden

Square group

Examine the fur of a three-toed sloth closely, and you may notice a greenish tint that is not paint at all, but algae, which are tiny plant-like organisms that grow on the sloth's hair.

Sloths move extraordinarily slowly and spend most of their time hanging in the trees of the rain forest, so the algae have ample opportunity to establish themselves. A sloth's hair has microscopic grooves that retain moisture, which provides the algae with a place to grow, and the warm, humid climate of the rain forest is exactly what the algae prefer.

Does the algae benefit the sloth? Scientists believe that it may, because the green coloration can help the sloth blend into the surrounding leaves, which conceals it from hungry eagles and big cats.

Even more living things share the fur. Certain kinds of moths live there, and they lay their eggs in the sloth's waste. Some scientists suspect that the moths may help to feed the algae, while others are still studying this idea.

A sloth is never truly alone. Its coat holds an entire community of small creatures, and each one lives in its own way.

Questions

1. What is the greenish tint in a sloth's fur?

_____

_____

2. Why do the algae have ample time to settle in?

_____

_____

3. How does a sloth's hair help the algae grow?

_____

_____

4. How might the green color benefit the sloth?

_____

_____

5. What other living things share the sloth's fur?

_____

_____

6. Why are scientists still studying the moths?

_____

_____

Words to know

algae: tiny plant-like living things that grow in damp places
tint: a light shade of color
grooves: small narrow channels
community: a group of living things in one place

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: A Sloth's Fur Is a Tiny Garden

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

Circle: A Sloth's Fur Is a Tiny Garden

Easier · 167 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 1.9

1. Algae, tiny plant-like living things.
2. The sloth moves very slowly.
3. Small grooves in the hair hold water.
4. It may help the sloth blend in with leaves and hide from enemies.
5. Certain kinds of moths.
6. Not everyone agrees yet that the moths help to feed the algae.

Triangle: A Sloth's Fur Is a Tiny Garden

This passage · 194 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.1

1. Algae, tiny plant-like living things.
2. The sloth moves very slowly and hardly moves at all.
3. Small grooves in the hair hold water.
4. It may help the sloth blend into the leaves and hide from enemies.
5. Certain kinds of moths.
6. Not everyone agrees yet that the moths help to feed the algae.

Square: A Sloth's Fur Is a Tiny Garden

Harder · 193 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.3

1. Algae, tiny plant-like organisms.
2. The sloth moves extremely slowly and scarcely moves at all.
3. Small grooves in the hair hold water.
4. It may help the sloth blend into the leaves and hide from enemies.
5. Certain kinds of moths.
6. Not everyone agrees yet that the moths help to feed the algae.