Name: _____ Date: _____

The Spadefoot Toad Waits Under the Desert

Circle group

A toad needs water to lay its eggs. But a spadefoot toad lives in dry country. Rain may not come for months. How does it manage? It waits underground.

The spadefoot has a hard, sharp edge on each back foot. It is shaped like a garden spade. The toad uses these feet to dig backward into loose soil. It wiggles down until it is buried. The soil down there is cooler and more damp. The toad stays still and does not eat. It may spend most of the year this way.

Then a heavy rain falls. The toad digs its way up. Soon toads gather around the new pools. The males call loudly to attract mates. The females lay eggs in the water.

The pools will not last long. The sun will dry them in a few weeks. So the eggs hatch fast, and the tadpoles grow quickly. They must become small toads before the pool is gone.

The young toads and the adults eat as much as they can. When the ground dries, they dig down to wait for the next rain.

Questions

1. What is special about the back feet of a spadefoot toad?

_____

_____

2. Why does the toad dig into the ground?

_____

_____

3. What brings the toads up to the surface?

_____

_____

4. What do the males do at the new pools?

_____

_____

5. Why do tadpoles need to grow quickly?

_____

_____

6. Why might the toad live by a clock set by weather?

_____

_____

Words to know

spade: a tool for digging with a flat edge
buried: covered up under the ground
damp: a little bit wet
tadpoles: baby frogs and toads that live in water
attract: to draw someone closer

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 Spadefoot Toad Waits Under the Desert

Triangle group

A toad needs water to lay its eggs, but a spadefoot toad lives in dry country where rain may not come for months. How does it manage? It waits underground.

The spadefoot has a hard, sharp edge on each back foot, shaped a little like a garden spade, and it uses these feet to dig backward into loose soil, wiggling down until it is completely buried. Down there the soil is cooler and more damp than the ground above, so the toad stays motionless without eating, and it may spend most of the year in this condition.

Then a heavy rain falls. Somehow the toad senses the change and digs its way up to the surface. Soon the toads gather around the new puddles and pools. The males call loudly to attract mates, and the females lay eggs in the water.

The pools will not last long, because the sun will dry them out within a few weeks. For that reason, spadefoot eggs hatch quickly and the tadpoles grow rapidly, since they must turn into small toads before their pool disappears.

The young toads and the adults then eat as much as they can to build up their strength. When the ground dries again, they dig down to wait for the next rain.

The spadefoot has learned to live by a different clock, one that is set by the weather.

Questions

1. What is special about the back feet of a spadefoot toad?

_____

_____

2. Why does the toad dig into the ground?

_____

_____

3. What brings the toads up to the surface?

_____

_____

4. What do the males do at the new pools?

_____

_____

5. Why do spadefoot tadpoles need to grow quickly?

_____

_____

6. What does the writer mean by saying the toad lives by a clock set by weather?

_____

_____

Words to know

spade: a tool for digging with a flat edge
buried: covered up under the ground
damp: a little bit wet
tadpoles: baby frogs and toads that live in water
attract: to draw someone closer

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 Spadefoot Toad Waits Under the Desert

Square group

A toad requires water in which to lay its eggs, yet the spadefoot toad inhabits dry country where rain may not fall for months at a time. How does it cope? It waits underground.

The spadefoot has a hard, sharp edge on each back foot, shaped rather like a garden spade, and it uses these feet to dig backward into loose soil, wriggling downward until it is completely buried. Down there the soil is cooler and more damp than the ground above, so the toad remains motionless and does not eat, and it may spend most of the year in this condition.

Then a heavy rain falls. Somehow the toad senses the change and digs its way up to the surface. Before long, toads gather around the new puddles and pools. The males call loudly to attract mates, and the females lay their eggs in the water.

The pools will not last long, because the sun will evaporate them within a few weeks. For that reason, spadefoot eggs hatch remarkably quickly, and the tadpoles develop at a rapid pace, since they must transform into small toads before their temporary pool disappears altogether.

The young toads and the adults then eat as much as they possibly can to build up their strength. When the ground dries once more, they dig down to wait for the next rain.

The spadefoot has learned to live by a different kind of clock, one that is set by the weather.

Questions

1. What is special about the back feet of a spadefoot toad?

_____

_____

2. Why does the toad dig down into the ground?

_____

_____

3. What brings the toads up to the surface?

_____

_____

4. What do the males do at the new pools?

_____

_____

5. Why must spadefoot tadpoles grow at a rapid pace?

_____

_____

6. What does the writer mean by a clock set by the weather?

_____

_____

Words to know

spade: a tool for digging with a flat edge
buried: covered up under the ground
damp: a little bit wet
tadpoles: baby frogs and toads that live in water
attract: to draw someone closer

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 Spadefoot Toad Waits Under the Desert

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

Circle: The Spadefoot Toad Waits Under the Desert

Easier · 183 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 1.4

1. Each has a hard, sharp edge shaped like a spade for digging.
2. To wait underground where the soil is cooler and more damp.
3. A heavy rain.
4. They call loudly to attract mates.
5. The pools dry up in a few weeks.
6. Its life follows the rain, not the calendar.

Triangle: The Spadefoot Toad Waits Under the Desert

This passage · 230 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.9

1. Each has a hard, sharp edge shaped like a spade, which it uses for digging.
2. To wait underground where the soil is cooler and more damp.
3. A heavy rain.
4. They call loudly to attract mates.
5. The pools dry up in a few weeks, so they must become toads before the water is gone.
6. Its life follows the rain instead of the calendar or the time of day.

Square: The Spadefoot Toad Waits Under the Desert

Harder · 245 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.9

1. Each has a hard, sharp edge shaped like a spade, which it uses for digging.
2. To wait underground where the soil is cooler and more damp.
3. A heavy rain.
4. They call loudly to attract mates.
5. The pools dry up within a few weeks, so they must become toads before the water is gone.
6. The toad's life follows the rain instead of the calendar or the time of day.