

KEYSTAGE 3 ENGLISH
Things that go scrunch in the night

Read 'Things that go scrunch in the night' and answer the questions.

Things that go scrunch in the night

I heard a curious sound that seemed to emanate from the forest behind our little hut. It was a fairly loud scrunching noise. It sounded to me, for some bizarre reason, like a match box being crushed in the hands of a very powerful man. Reluctantly I was forced to admit that, eccentric though the Rodriguans might be, it was unlikely that they crept about rain-drenched forests at three in the morning crushing matchboxes. Taking a torch, I eased my way out of our fragile hut and went to investigate. This was not quite so intrepid as it may appear, since there is nothing harmful in the animal line in Rodrigues, if you ignore the human animal. I made a careful search of the forest behind the hut, but could find nothing living that looked as though its normal cry resembled the crushing of a matchbox, and met nothing more ferocious than a large moth which seemed intent on trying to fly up the barrel of my torch. I went back to the hut and sat there, thinking. I wondered if we would catch any bats in the morning. Time was running short and I was debating with myself whether to move the nets nearer to the colony's roosting site. As I was pondering this problem, I was startled by the rasping matchbox noise again, this time very much closer and from several different directions. John, who had woken up, sat up and stared at me.

'What's that?' he enquired, sleepily.

'I haven't the faintest idea, but it's been going on for about ten minutes. I had a look round and I couldn't see anything'.

Just then, there was a positive battery of rasping noises, and the walls and the roof of the hut started to vibrate.

'What the hell can it be' asked John.

I shone my torch at the banana-leaf roof and saw it was quivering and swaying, as though in an earthquake, before we could do anything intelligent, the whole roof gave way and a cascade of giant landsnails, each the size of an apple, descended upon us. They were fat, glossy and wet, and they gleamed in the torchlight, frothing gently and leaving an interesting pattern of slime on our beds. It took us ten minutes to rid our shelter of these unwanted gastropods and to repair the roof.

HELP - Types of questions

Before you answer the questions below, read them through and work out which requires you to:

- select information from the text

- 'read between the lines'
- look at why the writer has structured and organised the text in a particular way
- investigate the writer's language choices
- look at the overall effect - how the writer's choices affect a reader's response.

Questions

1. In what order do the following pieces of information appear in the text?
 - a. Giant landsnails are the size of apples.
 - b. Giant landsnails leave slimy trails.
 - c. Giant landsnails make a scrunching noise as they move.
 - d. Giant landsnails can climb on to high surfaces.

2. What does Gerald Durrell suggest by the underlined text?

Taking a torch, I eased my way out of our fragile hut and went to investigate. This was not quite so intrepid as it may appear, since there is nothing harmful in the animal line in Rodrigues, if you ignore the human animal.

3. Read the sentence below. How does the order of the clauses add to the suspense?

Before we could do anything intelligent, the whole roof gave way and a cascade of giant landsnails, each the size of a small apple, descended upon us.

4. Read the last paragraph again. Explain how the writer's choice of words shows that Gerald Durrell has a positive attitude towards these animals.

5. How does the writer's description make the most of this comic situation?

You should write about:

- how the writer builds up suspense
- what happens at the end of the passage
- what comments the narrator makes
- how the noises and movements of the snails are described.

1. Find out about an animal that interests you and write a non-chronological report on it.

It should:

- Have a title that introduces the subject or tempts the reader, e.g. 'UFOs - do they exist?'
- Be in the present tense, e.g. *eagles nest at high altitudes...*
- Be in the 3rd person.
- Be written in non-chronological order (not in any particular order)
- Have separate topics in separate paragraphs (e.g. a paragraph on habitat, another of diet).
- Include facts to interest the reader.
- Have a glossary to explain technical or subject specific vocabulary.

Use different resources to gather information - interviews, CD ROMS, internet, encyclopaedia, magazines, TV programmes, etc.

Reports are factual but you could add in comments, use questions to get the reader involved with the subject matter, or directly speak to the reader, e.g. *You may have wondered why sloths hang upside down. Well, the reason that they...*

Save up an amazing fact for the end, e.g. *the most amazing thing about...*