

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Mealworms

Have you ever looked under a pile of leaves and found a tiny, brownish-yellow creature wiggling around? It might look like a worm, but it is actually something else! This creature is called a mealworm. Even though "worm" is in its name, a mealworm is actually a beetle in its young form.

## A Growing Life

Mealworms go through four different parts, or stages, of their life cycle. First, they start as a tiny egg. When the egg hatches, out comes the larva. This is the mealworm stage we see most often. As the mealworm grows, its skin becomes too tight. Because its skin is like a hard shell, it cannot stretch. To grow bigger, the mealworm must molt, which means it sheds its old skin and grows a new, larger one underneath.



Mealworm life cycle

After growing for a few weeks, the mealworm changes into a pupa. During this stage, it stays very still and does not eat. Finally, the pupa transforms into a dark-colored insect called a Darkling Beetle.

## Nature's Recyclers

Mealworms are scavengers. In the wild, they live in dark, damp places like under logs or in big piles of grain. They love to eat decaying leaves, rotting plants, and old wood. By eating these things, they help clean up the environment. They turn waste into nutrients that help plants grow.



Mealworm

Even though they are small, mealworms are a big deal in the food chain. Many animals, such as birds, lizards, and even some spiders, rely on mealworms for food. Whether they are cleaning the forest floor or feeding a hungry bird, these busy insects have a very important job!

1. Based on the text, what does the word "molt" mean?
  - A. To eat a very large meal.
  - B. To hide under a pile of leaves.
  - C. To shed an old skin to grow a new one.
  - D. To change from a beetle back into an egg.

2. Based on the passage, what is the effect of a mealworm's skin being like a hard shell?
- A. The mealworm can swim in deep water.
  - B. The mealworm never has to eat.
  - C. The mealworm stays the same size forever.
  - D. The mealworm must shed its skin to grow.
3. This question has two parts. First, answer Part A. Then, answer Part B.
- Part A:** What can you infer about mealworms based on the "Nature's Recyclers" section?
- A. Mealworms are helpful to the environment.
  - B. Mealworms are dangerous to other insects.
  - C. Mealworms prefer to live in sunny, dry fields.
  - D. Mealworms only live in places where humans provide food.
- Part B:** Which sentence from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
- A. "Many animals, such as birds and lizards, rely on mealworms for food."
  - B. "They turn waste into nutrients that help plants grow."
  - C. "They love to eat decaying leaves, rotting plants, and old wood."
  - D. "In the wild, they live in dark, damp places like under logs."
4. What is the author's primary purpose for writing this passage?
- A. To inform the reader about the life and habits of mealworms.
  - B. To persuade the reader to start a mealworm farm at home.
  - C. To entertain the reader with a story about a mealworm's adventures.
  - D. To explain the steps for catching a Darkling Beetle in the woods.
5. Why does the author describe mealworms as "Nature's Recyclers"?
- A. Because they can be used again and again as food for lizards.
  - B. Because they change their skin many times as they grow.
  - C. Because they turn old, dead plants into food for new plants.
  - D. Because they change from an egg into a beetle.