



# Beware the Plant!

by Lauren Vail

- 1 The sundew is a pretty plant. Its white flowers and sparkling leaves brighten up the wet marshes where it grows. Insects come flying to it. But watch out, insects! The pretty plant may eat you up!
- 2 The sundew gets its name from the way it looks. On its leaves it has many drops of liquid, or juice. These drops sparkle in the sunlight. The plant seems to shine with hundreds of drops of sunny dew.
- 3 A flat circle of leaves grows out from the sundew's stem. These leaves grow close to the ground. A thin stem rises from the middle. At the top of this stem are pretty white blooms.



- 4 This plant's leaves are not like any others you've seen. Each leaf has a great number of tiny tentacles, or feelers. These are like small hairs. The tiny drops of juice flow out of the tip of each feeler. This juice attracts insects to the plant. When insects walk on its leaves, the plant traps and kills them. Then it uses them as food. That's why it's called an insect eater.
- 5 When an insect lands on a sundew leaf, it gets stuck. That's because the shiny juice is sticky. Then the plant's feelers begin to move. The feelers bend over the insect. They pin it to the leaf. More juices flow over the insect. Soon it gets no air, and it dies. It has drowned in the juices. The plant juices then change the soft parts of the insect's body into a liquid. Then the plant takes in this liquid as food.
- 6 Does this seem strange for a plant? Well, here's something even stranger. The sundew "knows" what it can "eat" and what it can't. Suppose a grain of sand falls on its leaf. Or a piece of dirt. What happens? Nothing. The little feelers don't curl over. The juices don't flow. But these things *do* happen if you put a bit of egg or meat on the leaf.
- 7 Somehow the plant can tell what is food and what isn't. People have tried to trick the plant with other things. But you just can't fool a sundew!

## COMPREHENSION

**A** Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1** This story is mainly about
  - a** what the sundew looks like and how it catches food.
  - b** how insects land and get stuck on a sundew.
  - c** why people can't trick the sundew with sand and dirt.
- 2** Insects probably come to the plant's juice because
  - a** they think it's deadly.
  - b** they think it's glue.
  - c** they think it's water.
- 3** The sundew's juice helps catch an insect the way
  - a** a cat helps catch a mouse.
  - b** bait helps catch a fish.
  - c** a rope helps catch a horse.

**4** A sundew uses its leaves like you use your

- a** mouth.
- b** nose.
- c** legs.

**5** When the author says that a sundew can't be fooled, she means that it can tell

- a** that people are not friendly.
- b** that insects and eggs are different.
- c** what is best for it.

## LEARN ABOUT WORDS

**B** Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1** shining; glistening (1)
- 2** lowlands covered by water (1)
- 3** flowers (3)
- 4** draws; lures (4)
- 5** catches (4)
- 6** comes to rest; alights (5)
- 7** move smoothly like water (5)
- 8** fool; deceive (7)

**C** A word may have more than one meaning. Its meaning will depend on how it is used.

The *fly* buzzed around the room.  
The bird will *fly* to its nest.

Look at each word in **bold type** below. Note the paragraph number. Look back at the paragraph. Which meaning does the word have there? Write *a* or *b*.

**9 leaf** (4)

- a** flat, green part of a plant
- b** a thin sheet of something

**10 stuck** (5)

- a** stabbed; pricked
- b** unable to move

## THINK ABOUT IT

**D** Most words add an *s* to mean more than one.

plant → plants

But sometimes words change their spelling to mean more than one.

one wolf → two **wolves**

one man → two **men**

Read each sentence. Which of the two words in ( ) fits the sentence? Write the word.

- 1 The sundew's (leaf, leaves) help it eat.
- 2 This plant grows in a (marsh, marshes).
- 3 Many insects have lost their (life, lives) because of this plant.
- 4 Each (leaf, leaves) is covered with drops of sticky liquid.
- 5 To save its (life, lives), a bug should avoid the sundew.

**E** Read each sentence below. If the sentence is only about the sundew's feeler, write *feeler*. If it is only about the sundew's juice, write *juice*. If it is about both, write *both*.

- 6 It grows out of the leaf.
- 7 It does nothing to a grain of sand.
- 8 It is sticky.
- 9 It helps the sundew trap insects.
- 10 It causes the insects to drown.