

The Indian Mongoose (close read)

The Indian mongoose has a **splendid** reputation for bravery. That reputation dates back to ancient Egypt, where the weasel-like creature scouted out crocodiles and ate their eggs or their newly hatched **brood**. The ancient Egyptians called the mongoose pharaoh's mouse, but that name is misleading. The mongoose is no mouse.

The Indian mongoose lives in fields or in heavy brush: tangled **thickets** and hedges. It eats rats, mice, snakes, lizards, the eggs of those creatures, and insects. It usually hunts at night. Most important, the mongoose can move like lightning. Its speed is a great advantage when it does the thing for which it is most famous: killing cobras and other snakes native to India. The mongoose is a snake's worst enemy.

In some ways the mongoose has an advantage over the snake. Its thick hide and long thick hair act as armor, protecting it from the snake's poisonous fangs. In addition, it takes a lot of cobra venom to kill an adult mongoose. The young mongoose is at risk, however, because its body is less tolerant of the venom. Many young mongooses die of snakebites before they can become skilled fighters.

The mongoose's snake dance is dazzling to behold. The mongoose is balancing lightly on its feet. **In a fraction of a second**, it leaps in any direction. By the time the snake strikes, the mongoose has already moved. When the snake grows exhausted, the mongoose leaps onto its back. At last the mongoose has **clenched** the snake's head between its sharp teeth, and it snaps the snake's spine.

Some species of mongooses are bred as pets. A mongoose may seem like a peculiar pet, but the animal is both intelligent and entertaining. If you happen to be in India, one may even save your life.

1. Underline the words that tell what is **splendid** about the mongoose. Give an **antonym** of splendid.

2. **Circle** the words that describe the crocodiles' **brood**. Give a **synonym** for brood.

3. **Circle** the words that give a clue to the meaning of **thickets**. Use **thickets** in a sentence. _____

4. **Underline** the words that tell what happens in a fraction of a second. Tell about something else that can happen in a fraction of a second. _____

5. **Circle** the words that tell what the mongoose has **clenched** between its teeth. **Rewrite the sentence**, using a **synonym** for clenched.

6. **Circle** the words that tell what some mongooses are **bred** for. Name another animal that is bred for a special purpose, and explain that purpose.
