

Crusher will charm readers in this entertaining, clever novel about a snake in captivity and how she turns the tables on her human captor.

I am a snake.

No, not a rattlesnake. I just look like one. I'm a gopher snake.

One day an oily, filthy, fleshy human child crossed my path. As luck would have it, he knew the difference between a gopher snake and a rattlesnake. He has imprisoned me in a terrarium. His name is Gunnar. He calls me Crusher. He thinks I'm male. I'm not.

He dropped in a dead mouse and hoped I'd eat it. I buried it. He then dropped in a live one, which he called "Breakfast." I didn't lay a coil on it.

Gunnar thinks I'll be his adoring pet. He's wrong.

In fact, I am planning my escape. I may take Breakfast with me.



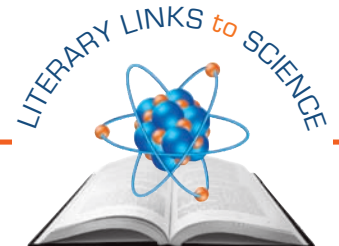
PATRICK JENNINGS grew up in a small town in Indiana, where there were no wild, lethally venomous snakes. He then lived in rural Arizona, where they were many, including seventeen varieties of rattlesnake. As an adult, he decided to confront his fears and learn more about the creatures. The more he learned, the more he came to hold snakes in high regard, and he even held some of them in his own hands. He introduced live snakes to groups of children, allowing them to touch them, hoping to prevent new generations from misunderstanding—and therefore, fearing—snakes as he did. Even after all this, however, Patrick is still seriously creeped out by the reptiles. He now lives in Washington State, where there are no wild, lethally venomous snakes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

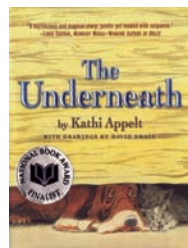
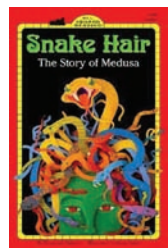
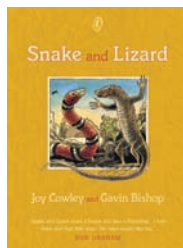
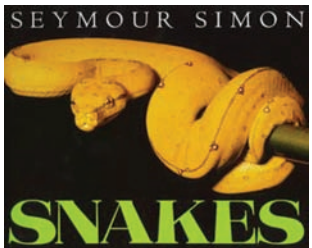
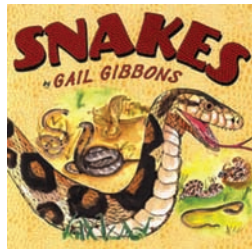
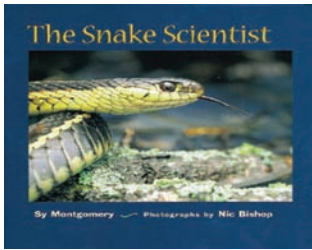
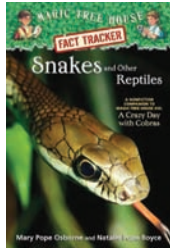
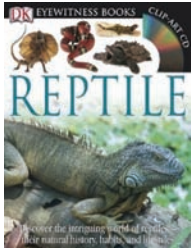


We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes

1. How does Crusher feel about humans? What are some differences between humans and snakes and humans and other wild animals? Why might humans appear “oily, filthy and fleshy?”
2. Some pets come from pet stores, but Gunnar took Crusher from the wild. Was that an OK thing for Gunnar to do? Is it different from buying a pet or adopting one from a shelter? Why or why not?
3. The reptiles in this book can communicate using telepathy. Do you wish you had telepathy? How would you use it? How would it be to have other people be able to understand your thoughts all the time?
4. Why does Crusher choose not to eat Breakfast? How do Crusher’s reasons change throughout the book?
5. How does Matthew (Gunnar’s friend) react to all of the “pets” in Gunnar’s room? How do the other boys react to Matthew? Have you ever disagreed with your friends? What happened?
6. Think about the names Gunnar chose to give his “pets.” (Crusher, Rex, Speedy, Dracula). Are they good names for each animal? What do the choices say about Gunnar and how he feels about the animals?
7. Crusher, Speedy and Rex all react very differently to being kept as Gunnar’s pets. How are their personalities different? How do you think you would behave in a scary and stressful situation?
8. How does Gunnar treat his “pets?” Why does he treat them this way? Do you know anyone who is mean to animals? Do you know anyone who is mean to their parents or their friends? Why do you think they act this way?



We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes



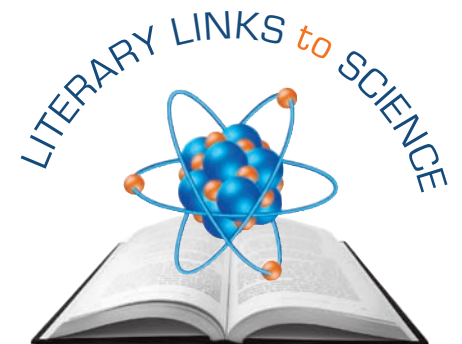
NON-FICTION

- DK Eyewitness Books: Reptiles* by Colin McCarthy
- National Geographic: Snakes!* by Melissa Stewart
- The Snake Scientist* by Sy Montgomery
- Snakes* by Gail Gibbons
- Snakes* by Seymour Simon
- Snakes and Other Reptiles* by Mary Pope Osborne

FICTION

- Bunnacula* by Deborah and James Howe
- Hamster and Cheese* by Colleen A.F. Venable
- Snake and Lizard* by Joy Cowley
- Snake Hair: The story of Medusa* by Stephanie Spinner
- Snakes Don't Miss Their Mothers* by M.E. Kerr
- The Underneath* by Kathi Appelt

RELATED MATERIALS

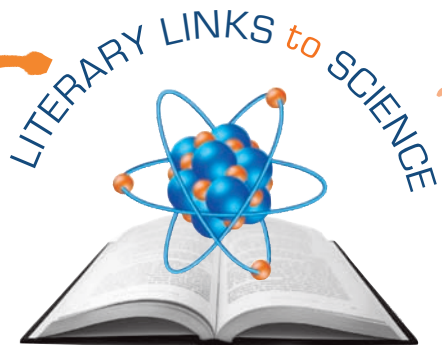




RELATED ACTIVITIES

We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes

1. Jennings uses a lot of animal-related words to describe the humans, such as calling hands “paws” and hair “fur.” Choose a partner and write a description of their appearance using similar adjectives.
2. Think about the setting of this book. What is a desert? How is it different from where you live? Do they have anything in common? Draw pictures of a desert and where you live and describe the characteristics of each place.
3. Write a short story (or paragraph) from the perspective of your pet or the pet of someone you know. Think about the pet’s personality. Is it kind like Rex? Smug like Speedy? Sarcastic like Crusher? What does this pet think and feel about humans and its surroundings?
4. What purpose does the cover of a book serve? Look closely at the cover of *We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes*. Draw a new design for the cover. Did you make a lot of changes? What do you like about the original cover? Why did you make the changes you chose to make?



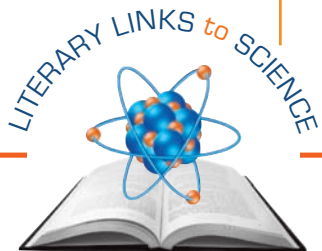
We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes

Read through the list of character traits and choose 5 that are true for each of the characters listed. There are no right or wrong answers, but be prepared to explain why you chose the traits you did.

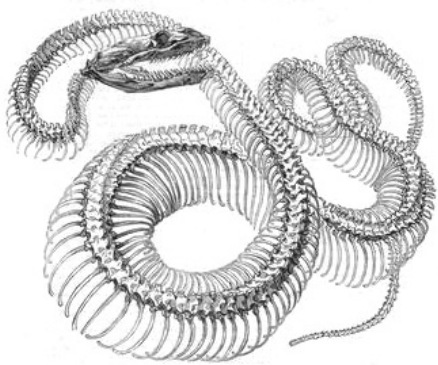
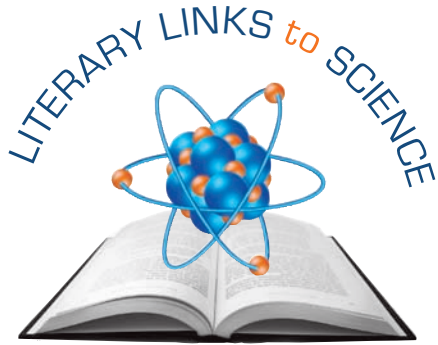
Gunnar	Crusher	Rex	Speedy	Breakfast

CHARACTER TRAIT WORKSHEETS

- adventurous
- afraid
- angry
- annoyed
- anxious
- arrogant
- bad
- bossy
- brave
- busy
- calm
- careful
- careless
- cautious
- cheerful
- clever
- confident
- confused
- courageous
- cruel
- curious
- daring
- dependable
- depressed
- determined
- dishonest
- disrespectful
- doubtful
- earnest
- easygoing
- embarrassed
- energetic
- evil
- excited
- fearless
- foolish
- friendly
- frustrated
- funny
- grateful
- greedy
- grouchy
- guilty
- happy
- helpful
- honest
- hopeful
- imaginative
- impatient
- impolite
- intelligent
- jealous
- kind
- lazy
- lonely
- loving
- loyal
- mean
- messy
- mischievous
- mysterious
- naughty
- nervous
- nice
- obnoxious
- polite
- quiet
- responsible
- rude
- sad
- scared
- selfish
- shy
- silly
- smart
- sneaky
- spoiled
- stubborn
- sweet
- trustworthy
- upset
- weak
- worried



SCIENCE VOCABULARY



We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes

1. **ARACHNID** - any of a class of arthropods having a segmented body divided into two regions of which the front part bears four pairs of legs but no antennae
2. **ASPHYXIATE** - to kill or make unconscious by inadequate oxygen
3. **HIBERNATE** - to pass the winter in a sleeping or resting state
4. **INSTINCT** - a natural ability or desire
5. **INVERTEBRATE** - an animal that has no backbone
6. **MAMMAL** - any of a class of warm-blooded vertebrates that include human beings and all other animals that nourish their young with milk and have the skin usually more or less covered with hair
7. **PREDATOR** - an animal that lives by killing and eating other animals
8. **QUADRUPED** - an animal having four feet
9. **SLOUGH** - to cast off one's skin
10. **SPECIES** - a class of things of the same kind and with the same name
11. **VEGETARIAN** - a being who eats food from plants and does not eat meat
12. **VENOM** - poison produced by an animal and passed to a victim usually by biting or stinging

Sources: EBSCOhost: Kids Search; Encyclopedia Britannica: Public Library Edition; Encyclopedia Britannica: School Edition

These sources are all available for free through MARVEL and the students should be encouraged to use them or physical dictionaries and encyclopedias. This is a good opportunity to talk about research and the importance of trusting your sources. They should not "just Google" the words and write down the first definition they find.

We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes

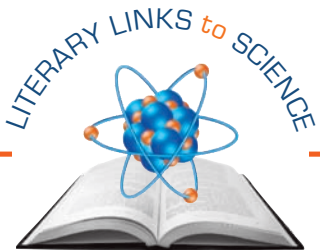
VOCABULARY WORKSHEET

Below you will find a list of scientific words that appear throughout *We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes*.

1. Please write the page number where you found the word.
2. Next to #1 please write what you think the word means from the context of the book.
3. Next to #2 please write the definition you find in a dictionary or encyclopedia.

Were your guesses close?

Do you agree with the definitions you found?



ARACHNID

pg #

1.

2.

ASPHYXIATE

pg #

1.

2.

HIBERNATE

pg #

1.

2.

INSTINCT

pg #

1.

2.

INVERTEBRATE

pg #

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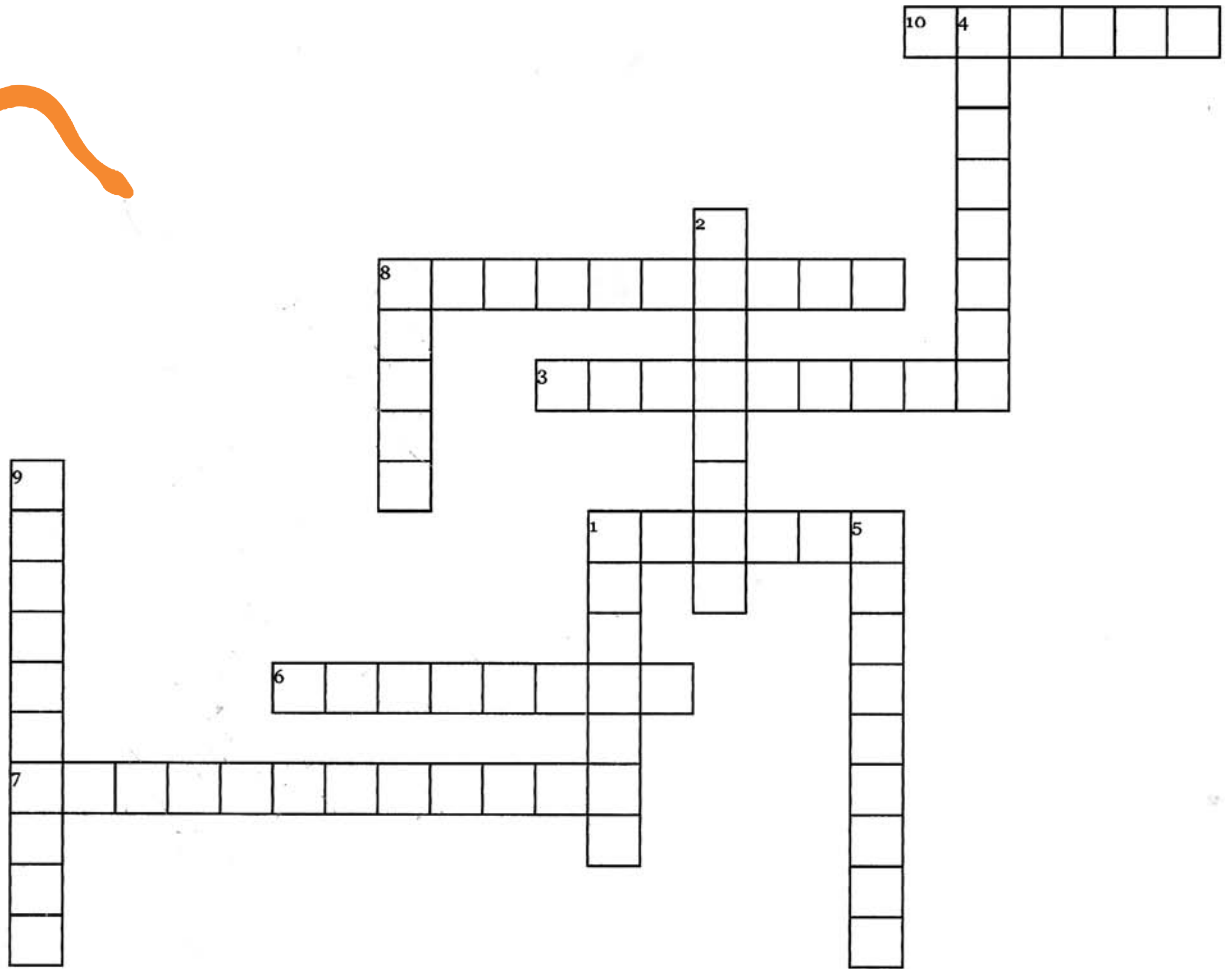
VENOM

pg #

1.

2.

We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes



CROSSWORD CLUES:

Across:

1. to cast off one's skin
3. an animal having four feet
6. a natural ability to desire
7. an animal that has no backbone
8. a being who eats food from plants and does not eat meat
10. any class of warm-blooded vertebrates that include human beings and all other animals that nourish their young with milk and have the skin usually more or less covered with hair

Down:

1. a class of things of the same kind and the same name
2. an animal that lives by killing and eating animals
4. any of a class of arthropods having a segmented body divided into two regions of which the front part bears four pairs of legs but no antennae
5. to pass the winter in a sleeping or resting state
8. poison produced by an animal and passed to a victim usually by biting or stinging
9. to kill or make unconscious by inadequate oxygen

