Name: _____

Hitchhikers in the Bathroom

by **Liana Mahoney**

Imagine this. You step up to the sink, wet your toothbrush, and begin cleaning your pearly whites. Out of the corner of your eye, you see something moving on the wall. Suddenly, you realize you're not alone in the bathroom. Your heart pounding, you turn toward the tiny intruder to get a better look.

You're horrified to see that it has eight legs, and a pair of oversized pincers on its front end. Is it some kind of miniature octopus, or a bizarre crab? Is it going to sting you?

Actually, it's a bug, and it's no more harmful to you than a housefly. This tiny bathroom bug is called a pseudoscorpion (SOO-doh-SCOR-pee-uhn). But don't be fooled by its name. It's not really a scorpion; it's just a relative. The pseudoscorpion is a kind of arachnid (uh-RAK-nid), which means it is closely related to spiders, scorpions, and mites. Like scorpions, pseudoscorpions have a segmented body and two enormous pincers. But pseudoscorpions lack the curved stinger that all true scorpions have.



Pseudoscorpions usually live outside in mulch, under tree bark, and in leaf litter. So how do they end up in the bathroom? They use those pincer-like claws to hitch a ride on other bugs, such as flies and beetles. When these insects come in, so do the pseudoscorpions - attached to their legs!

These tiny arachnids prefer moist places. Since the bathroom tends to be humid after bathing and showering, it's a likely place to find them. But they are easily overlooked. Most pseudoscorpions are only about two to eight millimeters long.

Pseudoscorpions don't bite or sting humans, and they can even be helpful. These bugs feed on common household pests, such as carpet beetle larvae, ants, mites, and small flies. Welcoming this hitchhiker into your home may mean there are fewer household pests to "bug" you!

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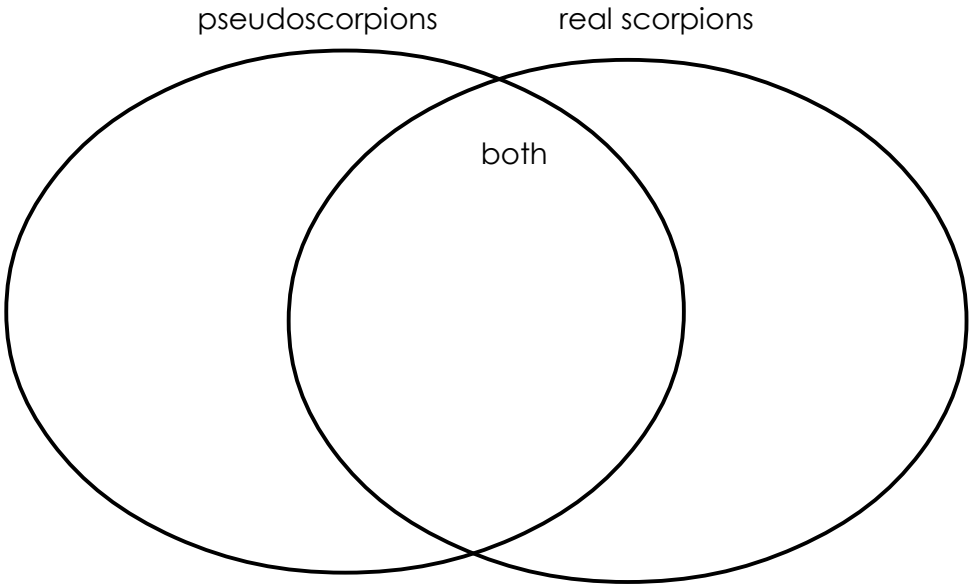


1. If you wanted to find a pseudoscorpion outdoors, where would you look?

_____

_____

2. Use the Venn diagram to show how pseudoscorpions and real scorpions are alike and how they're different.



3. How can pseudoscorpions be helpful to humans?

_____

_____

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Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

_____ **1.** bizarre	**a.** the immature forms of an insect
_____ **2.** moist	**b.** having a very small size
_____ **3.** enormous	**c.** strange, unusual
_____ **4.** miniature	**d.** extremely scared or shocked
_____ **5.** larvae	**e.** somewhat wet or damp
_____ **6.** intruder	**f.** divided into sections
_____ **7.** segmented	**g.** very large in size; huge
_____ **8.** horrified	**h.** invader