Name: _____ Date: _____

A Bottle of Lemonade With Honey in It

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 787 words

Picture a bottle of lemonade on a store shelf. Its maker says honey is one of the ingredients. Honey is the clue. It leads to a bee, and to Mikaila Ulmer. She began selling this lemonade when she was very young. This book follows the bottle back to a stand and then to a hive.

In 2009, Mikaila was four years old. Bees stung her twice in one week. "When I was four years old, I got stung by two bees in one week," she said later. She was afraid of bees. She was encouraged to turn that fear into a research project.

What did she find out? Bees do a job that flowers need. A flower makes a dust called pollen. To make seeds and fruit, pollen must reach the right part of a flower. This is called pollination. Wind can carry pollen. So can birds, bats and insects. These helpers are called pollinators. Bees are pollinators.

Mikaila said she learned that bees were dying at an alarming rate. She wanted to help them. So she read about bees. Now let us look inside a hive to see how bees live. A honey bee colony has three kinds of adult bees. There is one queen. There are many workers. There are a few drones.

The queen lays the eggs. At her busiest, she may lay up to about 1,500 in one day. The drones are males. They mate with a young queen. The workers are females. They do almost all the other jobs. A colony can grow to about 60,000 workers.

A worker bee changes jobs as she grows older. First she cleans the little wax cells. Next she feeds the baby bees, called larvae. A nurse bee may feed them up to 100 times a day. Later she may fly out to find food. A summer worker lives about six weeks.

A bee that finds food is called a forager. She drinks nectar from flowers. Nectar is a sweet juice, and it can be 80 percent water. A forager adds a helper called an enzyme as she swallows. The enzyme starts to break the sugar down. Then she flies home.

Back in the hive, other bees put the nectar in wax cells. Then they fan it with their wings. The moving air dries the nectar. Less water is left. When enough water is gone, the nectar has turned into honey. Honey is what Mikaila put in her lemonade.

Her lemonade began with an old recipe. It was for flaxseed lemonade, and it came from her great-grandmother. It was in a cookbook from the 1940s. Mikaila added honey. She said she wanted to start a business that could help bees and use that recipe.

At first she sold lemonade at events for young business owners in Texas. One of them is Lemonade Day. It teaches young people to start and run a business with a lemonade stand. Her stand and those events were the start of a business.

Soon the lemonade left the stand. A local pizza shop sold it. A Whole Foods store in Texas sold it too. Each new place put the bottles in front of more people. A business grows when more people can find what it sells.

In March 2015, Mikaila was ten years old. She went on a TV show called Shark Tank, with her BeeSweet Lemonade. On the show, business people listen to a plan. They may choose to invest. To invest is to give money to a company and own a part of it. Daymond John chose to invest in hers.

A business needs a name. The first name was BeeSweet Lemonade. In 2016, the company changed it to Me & the Bees Lemonade. Mikaila asked customers for ideas. She also asked classmates what they thought. Asking a few people for their ideas is called a focus group.

In March 2016, Time magazine told of a new deal. Whole Foods had signed a deal to sell her lemonade in 55 stores. Time named four states: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas. That is how a drink from a stand got onto many store shelves.

She kept working for bees, too. In 2016 she started the Healthy Hive Foundation. It says it helps protect bees through research, teaching and saving the places they live. One report in 2019 said she had taught more than 100 beekeeping classes. A 2025 magazine profile said she still manages the company.

Now look at the bottle again. One thing in it is honey. That honey started as nectar in a flower. A worker bee carried it home, and other bees fanned it dry. It took many bees, each doing a small job, to make it.

Questions

1. What is pollination?

A. Pollen moving to the right flower part
B. A bee making honey in the hive at night
C. A flower growing in the dark all day

2. What does a worker bee do after she cleans cells?

A. She lays eggs
B. She feeds the baby bees
C. She mates with the queen

3. Why does honey have less water than nectar?

A. Flowers take the water back
B. Bees add sugar to the water
C. Bees remove water by fanning it

4. In the sentence "A business grows when more people can find what it sells," what does grows mean?

A. Gets taller in the ground
B. Gets bigger
C. Gets quieter

5. What did the company change its name to in 2016?

A. Bee Sweet Honey Drinks
B. The Honey Hive Company
C. Me & the Bees Lemonade

Words to know

pollen: flower dust
forager: food finder
nectar: sweet flower liquid
enzyme: sugar-splitting helper
larvae: baby bees

Answer key: A Bottle of Lemonade With Honey in It

1. A. Pollen moving to the right flower part
2. B. She feeds the baby bees
3. C. Bees remove water by fanning it
4. B. Gets bigger
5. C. Me & the Bees Lemonade