Name: _____ Date: _____

Crunch Goes the Panda

Reading level 7 (3rd grade) · 386 words

Elio leaned on the rail at the zoo. Down below sat a big black and white bear. Crunch!

"It is a panda," said Mom. "And it is eating." The bear held a long green stick in its paws.

"What is that stick?" asked Elio. "Bamboo," said Mom. "It is a kind of very tall grass."

Almost all the food a panda eats is bamboo. It eats the stems and the leaves. It eats new shoots that poke up from the ground.

The outside of every stem is tough. The bear bit it and peeled it off in strips. Then it chewed the softer part in the middle.

Next it pulled the leaves off a stem. It rolled them up into a green bundle. Then it stuffed the bundle in its mouth.

How does it hold its food so well? It has a bump on its wrist. The bump works a bit like a thumb.

Elio could hear every bite. The bear has big, flat back teeth and strong jaws. Together they crush the stems.

"Does it eat anything else?" asked Elio. "It may eat grass, fruit or bugs," said Mom. "Wild ones eat eggs or meat now and then."

But bamboo is not very filling. A panda's belly is built like a meat eater's belly. It cannot get much out of bamboo.

So the bear eats, and eats, and eats. Every day, it eats for longer than a school day.

Elio went to visit the lions and ate a snack. When he came back, the bear was still eating!

All that food has to come out again. A panda can poop forty times in one day. Elio giggled so hard he snorted.

At last the bear climbed onto a log. It shut its eyes. Pandas nap between meals for a few hours.

A sign showed a mother panda with her baby. A new baby is pink and very small. It is about the size of a stick of butter.

The mother cradles her baby against her chest. She holds it with one paw. Its eyes stay shut for weeks.

Wild pandas live only in China. They live high in the mountains. Their forests are thick with bamboo.

The bear woke up and reached for more. Crunch! Can you pick up a pencil without using your thumb?

Questions

1. What does a panda eat almost all the time?

A. Fish
B. Bamboo
C. Apples

2. Why does a panda eat for so long each day?

A. Bamboo is not very filling
B. It is always bored
C. The zoo tells it to

3. In this book, what does "filling" mean?

A. Very cold
B. Hard to chew
C. Makes you feel full

4. What helps a panda hold its bamboo?

A. A bump on its wrist
B. Its long tail
C. Its sharp claws on its back feet

5. Why did Elio laugh at the panda?

A. It fell off a log
B. It can poop forty times in one day
C. It ate a lion's snack

Words to know

bamboo: tall woody grass
shoots: new young stems
wrist: joint above hand
jaws: bones for biting
filling: makes you full

Answer key: Crunch Goes the Panda

1. B. Bamboo
2. A. Bamboo is not very filling
3. C. Makes you feel full
4. A. A bump on its wrist
5. B. It can poop forty times in one day