Name: _____ Date: _____

Looking After a Leopard Gecko

Reading level 8 (4th grade) · 457 words

Ola waits by the glass home on her floor. Inside, a leopard gecko named Pebble is asleep under a rock. It is the middle of the day. Dad says, "Leopard geckos are night animals. Pebble sleeps all day and wakes up when it gets dark."

Leopard geckos come from dry desert lands. In the wild, a gecko hides under rocks or in holes all day. So Pebble's home has two hiding places. A leopard gecko needs two. She can pick the one she likes best.

At night, Pebble comes out of her hiding place to eat. She eats insects. Dad puts them in her dish, and Ola watches from a little way back, because a grown-up gives the food. A leopard gecko does best with live insects, and Pebble gobbles them up.

Every day, Ola helps with the water. Dad takes out the old water dish, and Ola fills a clean dish with fresh water from the tap. Pebble needs fresh, clean water every single day, even when she hides. Then Ola and Dad wash their hands with soap.

Hands get washed every time, because a gecko and her things can carry germs. Pebble's home stays in Ola's room, far from the kitchen. Dad never cleans her things in the kitchen. Ola does not kiss Pebble, and she does not hold her near her face.

Ola wants to hold Pebble. Dad says, "Not yet." A young gecko should not be held much until she has grown to about six inches. A grown-up decides when anyone holds her, and it is always short and gentle.

There is one more rule. Nobody ever grabs a gecko by the tail. A leopard gecko has a thick tail that stores fat for energy. If a gecko is scared, her tail can come off to help her escape. That is hard on her, so Ola keeps her hands far away from it.

Every few weeks, Pebble sheds her skin. Most leopard geckos shed about every four to eight weeks. Then she eats the old skin! Ola laughs and looks closely, because eating shed skin is something that geckos do. She marks the day on a calendar, and she tells Dad when it is over.

Ola knows what to look for. If Pebble's eyes look swollen or shut, or if Pebble will not eat, Ola tells Dad right away. Then Dad calls a vet. A vet knows what to do. Ola does not try to fix a sick gecko herself.

That night, Pebble creeps out from her rock and sniffs the air. Ola's jobs are done. She gave fresh water, she watched, and she washed her hands. Ask a grown-up to look at Peabody Pets with you. You will find it at pet.peabody.kids.

Questions

1. When is Pebble awake?

A. In the morning
B. At night
C. All day

2. Why does Ola wash her hands with soap?

A. A gecko and her things can carry germs
B. The water is cold
C. Pebble likes clean hands

3. What does a leopard gecko do with her old skin?

A. She buries it
B. She eats it
C. She hides it under a rock

4. What does Ola do if Pebble's eyes look swollen?

A. Tries a home fix
B. Waits a week
C. Tells Dad right away

5. In the book, what does "gentle" mean?

A. Fast and loud
B. Soft and careful
C. Large and strong

Words to know

desert: dry land
shed: drop old skin
gentle: soft and careful
vet: animal doctor
germs: tiny sickness bugs

Answer key: Looking After a Leopard Gecko

1. B. At night
2. A. A gecko and her things can carry germs
3. B. She eats it
4. C. Tells Dad right away
5. B. Soft and careful