Name: _____ Date: _____

Why Do Leaves Change Color?

Reading level 7 (3rd grade) · 180 words

In summer, a maple leaf is green. In fall, it turns yellow, orange, or red. Where do those colors come from?

The green comes from stuff called chlorophyll. A leaf uses it to catch sunlight and make sugar.

All summer, the tree keeps making green. So much green hides everything else.

In fall, the days get shorter and cooler. The tree makes less green. The green fades away.

Yellow and orange were in the leaf all along. The green was hiding them.

Reds are different. Many leaves make a new red stuff in the fall.

Reds depend on the weather. Sunny days and cool nights make the best ones.

Not every tree makes red. Some, like hickories and ash trees, go yellow. Maples and sweetgums often make red.

Before the leaf falls, the tree pulls its food back. It saves the food for winter.

Then the leaf drops. A yellow leaf did not really turn. It just lost its green.

So why do leaves change color? The tree stops making green. Then the yellow shows, and some leaves add red.

Questions

1. What makes a leaf green?

A. Sugar
B. Rain
C. Chlorophyll

2. When do yellow and orange show?

A. When the green fades
B. When it rains
C. When it is hot

3. When are many reds made?

A. In summer
B. In fall
C. All year

4. What happens to a yellow leaf in fall?

A. It paints itself
B. It loses its green
C. It turns blue

5. What does "fade" mean?

A. Get brighter
B. Lose color
C. Grow big

6. What helps make the best reds?

A. Rain all week
B. Hot nights
C. Sunny days and cool nights

Words to know

chlorophyll: leaf's green stuff
fade: lose color
maple: kind of tree
sugar: sweet food

Answer key: Why Do Leaves Change Color?

1. C. Chlorophyll
2. A. When the green fades
3. B. In fall
4. B. It loses its green
5. B. Lose color
6. C. Sunny days and cool nights