

The Aardvark

Review Key Words

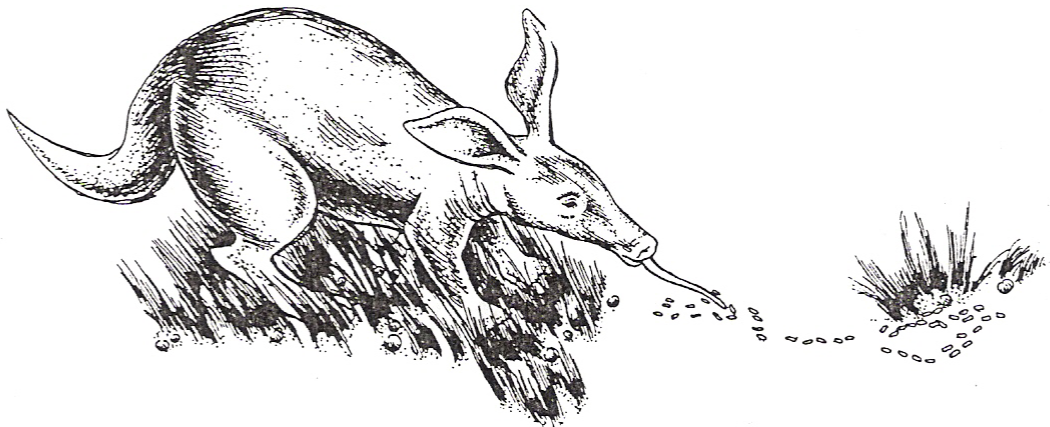
saliva	the watery liquid in the mouth
termites	insects that can damage wooden structures
burrow	a hole in the ground dug by an animal for shelter

8 The aardvark looks as if it had been
 17 **constructed** by a mad scientist let loose in a
 24 warehouse where parts of various animals are
 35 kept. Its thin head ends in a pig-like snout. Its
 44 ears belong on a rabbit. You might expect to
 55 find its tail on a kangaroo. The toes on its front
 63 feet even have webbing between them, like a
 68 duck, to help it dig.

75 This **unique** animal, which lives in Africa,
 83 has a surprising way of leaving its underground
 90 burrow. The aardvark waits until it is
 97 completely dark. It stands without moving for
 106 a few minutes at the **mouth** of its **burrow**.
 113 Suddenly it leaps out, bounds several times,
 122 then stops **abruptly** and rises up on its hind
 129 legs. At this point, the aardvark listens
 135 carefully to determine whether any enemies,
 143 such as lions, leopards, hyenas, or people, are
 150 nearby. Sometimes, if the burrow is **narrow**,
 158 the aardvark will back out, sweeping its tail
 168 before it, in much the same way that we wave
 178 our arms in front of us if we are blindfolded.
 Once the aardvark has left its burrow, it looks

187 for its favorite food—**termites**. But the
 194 aardvark can't get fast food service because the
 202 walls of the mounds where termites live are
 210 almost as hard as cement. It takes a lot of work
 221 for the aardvark to make an opening. It would
 230 be very hard for you to do this with your bare
 241 hands. Fortunately, the aardvark has sharp
 247 claws on its front paws to help it.

255 When the insects are **exposed**, the aardvark
 262 licks them up with its long tongue. This tongue
 271 is coated with **saliva**, so that termites stick to it
 281 and are easily swallowed. Sometimes the
 287 aardvark will even put its snout against the hole
 296 it has made and suck in termites like a vacuum
 306 cleaner. The aardvark has a huge appetite. A
 314 few hundred termites are about as filling for an
 323 aardvark as a tiny nibble of a Big Mac would
 333 be for you. After it eats its fill, it returns to its
 345 burrow to sleep all day. Aardvarks in zoos
 353 can't get termites, so they learn to eat a diet of
 364 chopped meat, eggs, oatmeal, and milk, with
 371 worms and ants sprinkled on top like nuts on a
 381 sundae.
 382



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Comprehension Questions

Identifying the main idea

1. What is the main idea of the story?
 - a. The aardvark is an unusual animal.
 - b. The aardvark eats many termites.
 - c. The aardvark lives in a burrow.

Recalling a fact

2. Why do aardvarks have webbed feet?
 - a. to help them swim
 - b. to help them dig
 - c. to help them eat

Getting meaning from the context

3. What does **mouth** mean in this story?
 - a. the lips, teeth, and tongue
 - b. an opening to a burrow
 - c. saying words in an angry way

Making connections within the text

4. When is the aardvark most likely to look for food?
 - a. in the early morning
 - b. when it is in its burrow
 - c. when it is dark

Connecting the author's and the reader's ideas

5. What do aardvarks do to keep them safe from predators?

Finding supporting details

9. Write about two features of the aardvark that support this statement: The aardvark has unique ways of obtaining food.

Developing vocabulary

6. An antonym is a word that has the opposite meaning of another word. Write the number for the word from column 1 in front of its antonym in column 2.

1. constructed	a. _____ ordinary
2. unique	b. _____ wide
3. abruptly	c. _____ slowly
4. exposed	d. _____ destroyed
5. narrow	e. _____ hidden

Attending to details

7. Write how the aardvark uses each body part listed below to get termites.

a. sharp claws	_____
b. sticky saliva	_____
c. long tongue	_____
d. long snout	_____

Processing information

8. The name aardvark comes from one of the official languages of the Republic of South Africa; **aard** means earth and **vark** means pig. Why is the name aardvark so fitting for this animal?

Enrichment Activity

Find information about the okapi, and describe how it is similar to the aardvark.