

Praying Mantis Facts



A praying mantis is a carnivorous invertebrate that got its name from its 'praying' posture of the front legs folded and held together. A mantis is an insect capable of camouflage, swift agile movement and three-dimensional vision.

- ★ The praying mantis (*Mantis religiosa*) is part of the Mantidae family. Mantises are classified into more than 2,400 species and in 15 different families. They are commonly found in tropical and subtropical areas. They also occupy regions with a temperate climate.
- ★ Mantis comes from the Greek word for prophet. The praying mantis gets its name from its bent forearms that make it look like it's in a prayer position.
- ★ A praying mantis is typically green or brown in color, although other colors like white and even purple exist. It is hard to spot a mantis among leaves and branches because it blends seamlessly with its surroundings. One can mistake this still stick figure for a twig. Its camouflage ability is advantageous for catching prey.

Praying Mantis Facts

- ★ The size of a praying mantis ranges from half an inch to half a foot long. Its average lifespan is one year.
- ★ A praying mantis has a triangular head, an elongated thorax, sharp mandibles and a snout. Fixed on a praying mantis' head are a pair of antennae, two bulging compound eyes and three simple eyes. They are able to swivel their heads 180 degrees to scan their surroundings.
- ★ Praying mantises have stereo vision, which allows them to see in three-dimension. The fovea in their eyes provides them with clear vision and sharp focus.
- ★ There are species of praying mantis that have wings and there are those that are wingless. Those that have wings can be classified based on their wing shape and size: long-winged, short-winged, and vestigial-winged.
- ★ A praying mantis is an ambush predator that only eats live creatures. When hunting for food, it usually stalks its prey, stays stationary, waits patiently for the prey to be close enough and then ensnares it with its spiky front legs, which are also referred to as “raptorial legs”. It's so quick in skewering its prey that the human eye can't see it. It usually catches aphids, insects, flies, crickets, grasshoppers and small spiders. This makes them ideal for pest control. They don't just eat insects; large species also attack hummingbirds, sunbirds, honeyeaters, warblers and small frogs to name a few. After eating, it cleans its forearms.
- ★ While praying mantises are naturally gifted at disguise, they also turn black when molting.



Praying Mantis Facts

- ★ Females are able to lay hundreds of eggs at a time. Baby praying mantises are called nymphs.
- ★ Praying mantises are also cannibals. Females are known for killing and eating their partners during or after mating. There are studies that suggest that after mating, the females stop producing pheromones, which attract male partners, giving unmated females a better chance of finding a mate.
- ★ Predators of praying mantises are frogs, lizards, spiders, hornets, ants, birds and bats.
- ★ In ancient civilizations, the praying mantis was believed to be a supernatural creature. It is believed to be a god in Khoisan culture and a necromancer in ancient Mediterranean culture.
- ★ The most prevalent species of praying mantis are the Chinese mantis, the European mantis and the Carolina mantis. They are popular pets.
- ★ The Chinese mantis is native to Asia, particularly in China, Japan, Korea and Thailand. This species is usually longer than others and can grow up to 11 centimeters. They are perfect as pets because they can adapt quickly to human interaction.
- ★ Other kinds of mantis are the dead leaf Mantis, the Arizona unicorn mantis, the African mantis, the orchid mantis, the Indian flower mantis, ghost mantis, thistle mantis and wandering violin mantis. Their common names typically come from their physical appearance.

Image of a ghost mantis



Praying Mantis Facts



Photo by: Thomas Quine

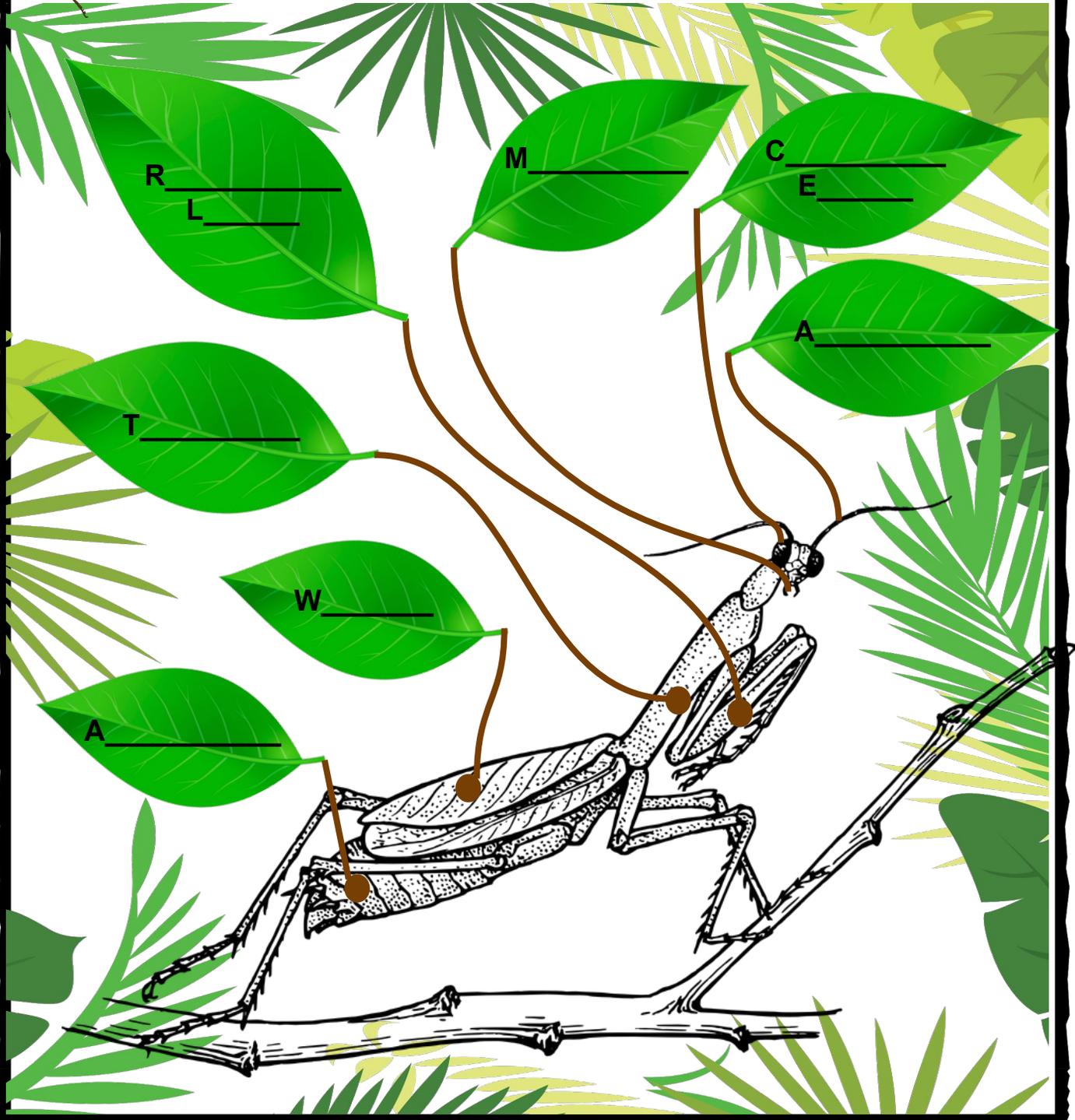
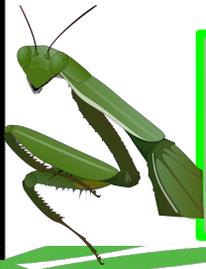
Image of a dead leaf mantis

- ★ The dead leaf mantis is native to Malaysia and looks just like a dead leaf.
 - ★ The Arizona unicorn mantis has two thorns next to each other on top of its head, which makes it look like a unicorn.
 - ★ The flower mantis is a species of praying mantis that mimics flowers. Oblivious prey comes to them to collect nectar but end up getting killed and eaten.
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- ★ In Chinese martial arts, there is a style of kung fu called Seven Star Praying Mantis. There are two strategies and fighting styles inspired by the praying mantis, namely the “Northern Praying Mantis” and the “Southern Praying Mantis”. In popular culture, Mantis in *Kung Fu Panda* is a praying mantis.
 - ★ Praying mantises are generally harmless to humans. They are no known venomous species.
 - ★ The praying mantis is not an endangered species but it is listed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species in Germany. It is illegal to hold them in captivity.

Name: _____

Parts of a Praying Mantis

The praying mantis is an insect that can easily resemble a tree branch or a twig. Can you label the body parts of a praying mantis? The first letters are given as clues!



R _____
L _____

M _____

C _____
E _____

T _____

A _____

W _____

A _____

Parts of a Praying Mantis

ANSWER KEY

Raptorial
Legs

Mandibles

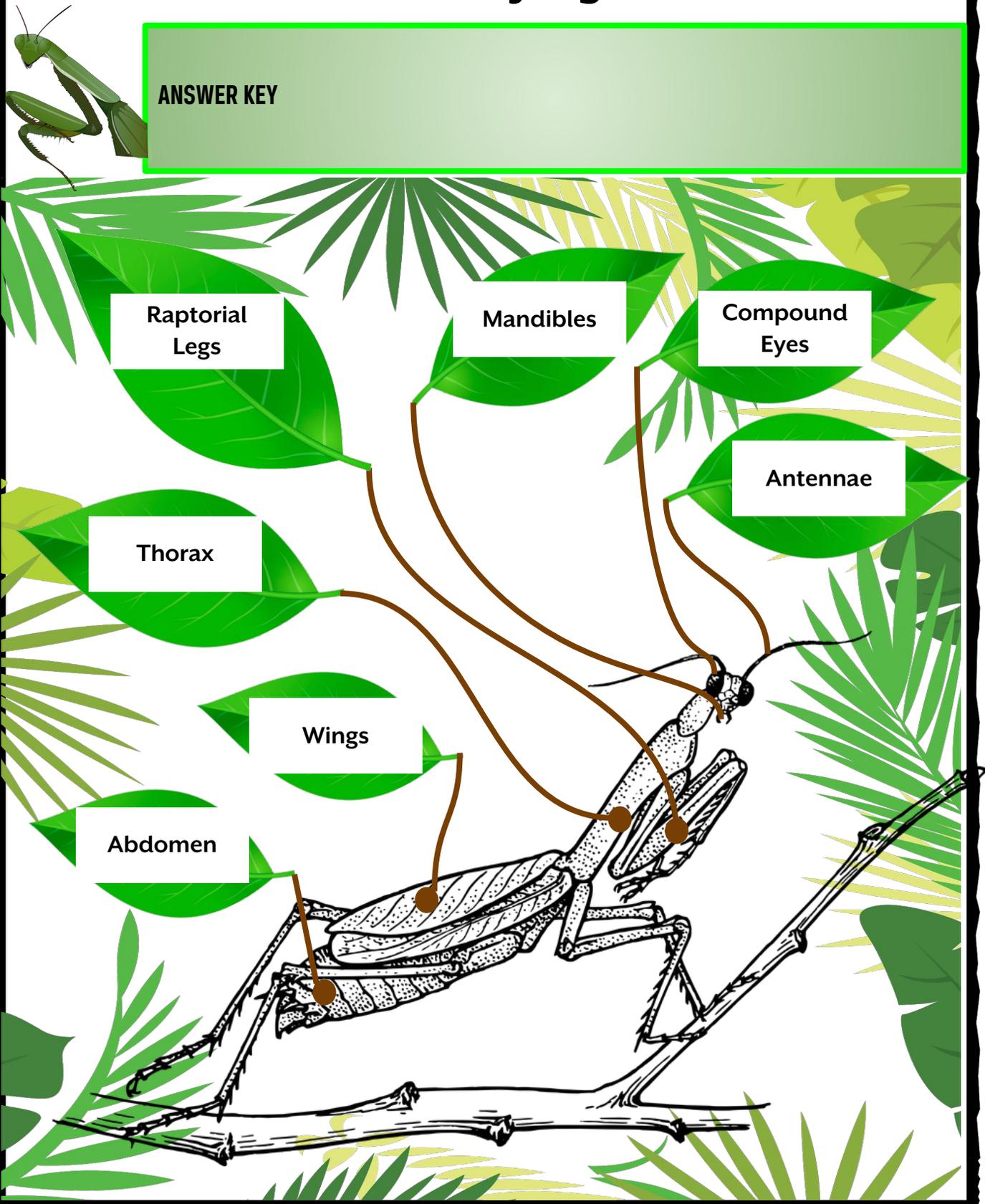
Compound
Eyes

Antennae

Thorax

Wings

Abdomen



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