



Questions for a Porcupine

1. There are 5 topics or main ideas in the article, "Questions for a Porcupine."
Write them in the top boxes.
2. Write facts for each of the topics or main ideas in the spaces below.

Main Idea: Quills	Main Idea:	Main Idea:	Main Idea:	Main Idea:
Facts:	Facts:	Facts:	Facts:	Facts:

Questions for a Porcupine Scoring Guide

Standard: Students will apply reading, listening, and viewing strategies to informational texts across all areas of curriculum.

Performance Indicator	1 Doesn't Meet	2 Partially Meets	3 Meets	4 Exceeds
D.4 Summarize informational texts (e.g., identify the main idea or concept and the supporting details).	Three or fewer main ideas are included in the organizer with few to no relevant details.	The organizer contains four accurate main ideas with some relevant details from the article. Errors indicate gaps in understanding.	The organizer contains the five main ideas with relevant details from the article. Minor errors do not indicate gaps in understanding.	The organizer is complete with all main ideas and abundant contextualized details from the article.

Questions for a Porcupine

By Ellen Obed

What would I ask a porcupine if a porcupine could talk? I have many questions coming out of my head like quills coming out of a porcupine's back.

First, I have quill questions. Is a porcupine born with quills? What are his quills made of? How many quills does a porcupine have? Does a porcupine shoot his quills?

If a porcupine could talk, he would tell me about his quills. He would say that he is born with quills. He is covered in a thin sac so his mother won't get hurt! When his mother takes off the sac, his soft quills quickly harden in the air. His quills are sharp, strong spines with tiny barbs near the tips. They are loosely attached to his skin. A porcupine has 30,000 of them - on his neck and back and tail. When he gives a quick, strong swing with his tail to hit an animal, the quills come right out. A porcupine would tell me that he doesn't need to shoot his quills!

What does a porcupine eat and who eats a porcupine? If a porcupine could talk, he would tell me what he likes to eat all around the year. In summer

it's leaves - leaves of flowers and shrubs and trees. One of his favorite meals is the leaf of the yellow pond lily. He swims out into the water to get it. His tree leaf favorites are quaking aspen and white birches. In winter it's the inner bark, twigs and tender buds of trees. His winter tree favorites are hemlock, spruce, and fir. But what does he like best? If a porcupine could talk, he would say, "salt". He finds antlers and bones on the forest floor. He gnaws them for their salt until they are gone. He travels to roadsides in early spring to find salt left from winter saltings. He waddles into old cabins to chew on tables and chairs and tool handles. He finds the taste of salt on whatever humans have touched. Anywhere, anytime, anything for salt! That's what a porcupine would say to me.

Who eats a porcupine? If a porcupine could talk, he would tell me that he has many predators - animals that would like to eat him! Some of these predators are the fisher and the bobcat, the coyote and the fox. The fisher gets a meal by attacking the porcupine's face where there are no quills. Other animals try the "paw trick." They put a paw under the porcupine and flip him over. There are no quills on his belly so he is left unprotected.

When does a porcupine sleep? Where does a porcupine sleep? Does he hibernate in the wintertime? If a porcupine could talk, he would tell me that he likes to sleep in the daytime up in his favorite tree! He finds a

comfortable place between the branches and the trunk. On clear days the sun wraps him in a warm, sparkling blanket. There he sleeps until the sun goes down. The porcupine also sleeps in hollow logs, holes in trees, and in caves. He doesn't hibernate like some animals do, but he has his own special winter sleeping places where he sleeps when he isn't looking for food. The male porcupine likes to be in his favorite tree called the "station" tree even in a blizzard! The females and young porcupine like to den in rocks and caves.

Does the porcupine have a voice? Does a porcupine make any sounds? If a porcupine could talk, he would tell me that he talks! His predators and other porcupines know what he is saying. He grunts and moans and whines and squeaks. He mews and sobs and snorts and barks. He can even shriek! When he is quarreling with another porcupine, he grunts and snarls. When he is mating in the fall, he grunts and hums and whines. And when he is backing up with his quills raised toward his predators, he makes a warning chattering sound.

What else would I ask a porcupine if a porcupine could talk? Do I have as many questions coming out of my head as quills on a porcupine's back? I don't have 30,000 questions, but I might have ten or twelve, twenty or thirty more. How many questions do you have for a porcupine?