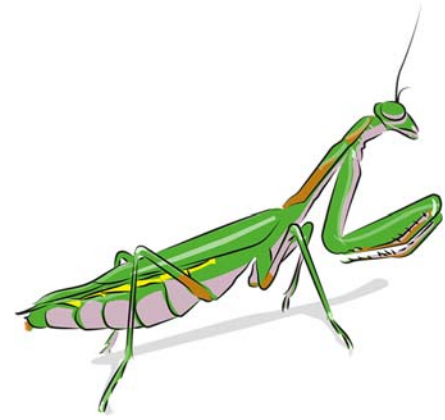


Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Praying Mantises: Nature's Stealthy Predators



Praying mantises are fascinating insects known for their unique appearance and stealthy hunting skills. These incredible creatures got their name because their folded front legs make them look like they are praying. While they seem peaceful in their prayer pose, they are actually skilled predators, always on the lookout for their next meal.

### What Do Praying Mantises Look Like?

Praying mantises come in various sizes and colors, but they generally have long, slender bodies with two large, compound eyes and triangular heads. What sets them apart is their folded front legs that resemble hands held in prayer. This feature gives them their name, "praying mantis." They can be green, brown, or even pink, blending in with their surroundings to hide from both predators and prey.

### Hunting Techniques

Praying mantises are expert hunters, and they use their camouflage to their advantage. They remain perfectly still, often blending in with leaves or branches, waiting for unsuspecting insects to come close. When a potential meal gets within striking distance, they use their lightning-fast front legs to grab their prey. They have strong jaws to deliver a quick and powerful bite, immobilizing their victim.

### Life Cycle

The life cycle of a praying mantis is intriguing. They go through a process called metamorphosis, which means they change form as they grow. Praying mantises start as tiny eggs attached to leaves or stems. When they hatch, they become nymphs, which look like miniature versions of adult mantises. As they grow, they shed their skin multiple times until they reach their full adult size.

### Eating Habits

Praying mantises are voracious eaters, and they will eat almost anything they can catch. Their diet includes insects like flies, bees, and grasshoppers, and sometimes, even each other! After catching their prey, they often eat it alive, which might sound a bit gruesome, but it's their way of getting the freshest meal.

### Defensive Tactics

While praying mantises are skilled hunters, they are also cautious about their own safety. If they feel threatened, they can strike a threatening pose with their front legs, hiss, or even make themselves look larger to scare away predators. However, they are not always successful in avoiding danger.

In conclusion, praying mantises are unique and fascinating insects known for their praying posture and stealthy hunting skills. They are skilled predators that play an essential role in controlling insect populations in their habitats. While they may seem like peaceful insects at first glance, they are always on the prowl for their next meal, making them intriguing creatures of the insect world.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Praying Mantises: Nature's Stealthy Predators

### Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Why are praying mantises called "praying" mantises, and what makes them look like they are praying?
2. How do praying mantises hunt, and what is their hunting strategy?
3. Describe the life cycle of a praying mantis.
4. What do praying mantises eat, and how do they typically consume their prey?
5. How do praying mantises defend themselves from predators?