

It was not necessary to remind Uncle Paul of his promise. He took advantage of the first leisure moment to tell the children the story of the bees.

“A well-peopled hive contains from twenty to thirty thousand bees. That is about the population of our secondary towns. In a town all cannot follow the same trade. Bakers make bread, masons houses, carpenters furniture, tailors clothes; in short, there are artisans for every occupation. In like manner, in the social **economy** of the beehive, there are various divisions; namely, that of the mothers, that of the fathers, and that of the workers.

“For the first, there is only one bee in each hive. This bee, mother of the whole population, is called the queen. She is **distinguished** from the workers by a large body and the absence of working implements. Her business is to lay eggs. She has as many as twelve hundred at a time in her body, and others keep on forming as fast as the first are laid. What a **formidable** business is the queen’s! To lay and lay is her one and only function.

“The business of father falls to six or eight hundred **idlers** called drones. They are larger than the workers and smaller than the queen. Their large bulging eyes join together on the top of the head. They have no sting. Only the queen and the workers have the right to carry the poisoned **stiletto**. The drones are deprived of this weapon. One asks, what use are they? One day they form a retinue of honor to the queen, who takes a fancy to fly through the air; then hardly anything more is heard of them.

“Now come the workers, about twenty or thirty thousand bees to one queen. These are called working-bees. They are the ones you see in the garden flying from one flower to another, gathering the **harvest**. Other workers, a little older and consequently more experienced, remain in the hive to look after the housekeeping and to **distribute nourishment** to the **nurslings** hatched from the eggs laid by the queen. There are, then, two bodies of workers to be distinguished: the wax-bees, younger, which make wax and gather the materials for honey; the nurses, older, which stay at home to bring up the family.”

Extract: The Story-book of Science by Jean-Henri Fabre

### Questions:

Read each sentence. Circle the word or words that tell the meaning of the bold words.

1. The social **economy** of the beehive refers to the
  - a. towns
  - b. divisions within the hive
  - c. the size of the hive
2. The queen is **distinguished** in what way by the workers.
  - a. She has a large body and no tools.
  - b. She is the only mother in the colony.
  - c. She lays eggs.
3. **Formidable** in the sentence, “What a **formidable** business is the queen’s!” refers to

- a. The large size of the queen.
  - b. The large amount of egg the queen lays.
  - c. The queen's ability to keep laying eggs.
4. Why are drones referred to as *idlers*?
- a. They have large bulging eyes.
  - b. They are poisonous.
  - c. They are there as company to show the queen honor.
5. Only the queen and the workers have the right to carry the poisoned *stiletto*. "*Stiletto*" refers to the bee's \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. sting
  - b. bulging eyes
  - c. wings
6. The *harvest* is \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. The many bees in the garden.
  - b. The many flowers in the garden.
  - c. The period of time the bees gather nectar.
7. What is meant by "*nurslings*"?
- a. the eggs laid by the queen.
  - b. the hatchlings from the eggs laid by the queen.
  - c. the babies of humans.
8. What is meant by the word "*nourishment*"?
- a. Food
  - b. Flowers
  - c. Big eyes
9. Whose job is it to *distribute nourishment* to the *nurslings*,
- a. The queen
  - b. The drones
  - c. The workers.
10. What is a good title for this passage?
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