

Quack Splash – Early Levels

From Fast ForWord Reading 5

Andrew reached down and gently lifted the hollow log, expecting to see Kernel. _____ there was nothing there except the bottom of the cage. Andrew's heart started beating like a bass drum in a marching band. Where was Kernel? A normal, boring Saturday had just turned into an unexpected adventure.

Every morning, Andrew took care of his pet corn snake, Kernel. He made sure the snake's cage was clean and warm. He filled the water bowl with fresh water. _____ To change them, he had to take the snake out of the cage.

Andrew decided to look in his room first. He searched high and low. He got on the floor and looked under the bed. He pulled his desk away from the wall so he could see behind it. He even searched through his dresser drawers. As he searched, he _____ a dirty sock and a stale pizza crust. But there was no snake.

If kernel hadn't been stolen, then he must have escaped. _____
_____ Andrew didn't know when Kernel had gotten out or how far he might have traveled. He decided to search the entire house until he found his pet.

There was no answer. He cautiously opened the door and went in. His brother's room was even messier than his own. Books were stacked so high that they would topple if someone sneezed. Magazines covered the bed. Clothes were spread all over the floor. _____

Andrew tried the think- like- a-snake approach: if he were Kernel where would he try to hide? Andrew decided that if he were a snake, he'd stay in his comfortable cage. Sadly, Andrew realized that trying to think like a snake _____. He began sneaking through the rest of the house, making a quiet search.

Andrew walked over to the sweatshirt, sidestepping a glob of jelly on the rug. Just as Andrew reached down, Kernel poked his head out and flicked his tongue. Hello to you, too. Andrew thought. Andrew carried Kernel back to his room. _____
And this time, he made sure the lid was on tight.

Standing in the doorway, Andrew surveyed the mess in front of him. Kernel could be anywhere in this clutter- or nowhere. It would take hours to move all this stuff out of the way, Andrew thought. And he really didn't feel like poking through all the dirty laundry. _____

If Kernel hadn't been stole, then he must have escaped. _____
Andrew didn't know when Kernel had gotten out or how far he might have traveled. He decided to search the entire house until he found his pet.

Quack Splash –Late Levels

Although black pepper grows mainly in tropical regions, it quickly became popular all over the world. Over 4000 years ago, pepper was being traded from India to the Middle East. Eventually, traders brought it all the way from Europe _____ This lengthy trip made pepper very expensive for Europeans.

Black pepper belongs to the genus *Piper*, as do all true peppers. Other true peppers also contain piperine and include white, long, and Ashanti peppers. Black and white peppercorns are dried fruit of a topical native to southern India. _____ The milder Ashanti pepper is grown and used mostly in West Africa.

Europeans once consumed pepper in much larger quantities than they do today, and this was another reason pepper cost so much. In addition to seasoning their meals with it, they used pepper to preserve foods. _____ It took a lot of pepper to accomplish all of these ends.

Because pepper was so highly valued, explorers went in search of similar foods that they could bring home. Traders, in turn, looked for new spices that they could sell. Traders kept their spice sources _____, to make the spices seem more mysterious. This sense of mystery made spices more exciting- which helped drive up the price.

Pepper may have had many uses, but the main reason people liked pepper was for its taste. During the Medieval times, most people had only one cooking pot and ate the same boring gruel everyday. For those who could afford it, pepper was an exciting way to add variety and flavor. The richer you were, the more the pepper you put in your food. _____ Pepper was the most highly prized of all luxury goods.

Like black pepper, Sichuan pepper can make your tongue feel pleasantly numb. Cayenne pepper is much more pungent than black pepper, and it is made from a type of chile. Chiles belong to the genus *Capsicum* and are thus not true peppers. Columbus was the first person to bring chiles back to America, and these so-called “chile peppers” _____ in Europe.

The active ingredient in chiles is called capsaicin and is eight times more pungent than piperine. Like piperine, capsaicin increases the flow of saliva and stomach juices and makes you sweat. Thus capsaicin also increases your appetite and cools you off. _____

Unlike piperine, capsaicin has no odor or even flavor. It doesn't affect the taste buds but instead stimulates cells called pain receptors. Capsaicin is made up of five different

chemicals, which each burn in different ways._____ The other two produce a slower, less fierce, and longer lasting burn on the tongue.

Pepper is nothing to sneeze at, but it is chiles that can really bite back. The term “chile” refers to a wide range of fruits from the genus *Capsicum*. There are a tremendous variety of chiles, which range vastly in size, shape, color, and hotness. The smallest chiles come from Laos, including one variety so small that they are known as “mouse droppings.” _____ many varieties are long, thinned, and pointed.

While curing ailments is useful, people love to eat chiles for their heat. People who like a lot of chiles usually build up a tolerance to the heat. In fact, the more chiles you eat, the more it takes for you to feel the same hotness. If you like less heat, you can reduce it by removing the chile’s inner veins before eating it._____

Although heat is the main attraction, each variety of chile also has a different flavor. Cooks certainly add chiles for their flavor as well as their hotness. Many traditional dishes require a particular type of chile, and some may require multiple types. With so much variety, it is no surprise that 25% of all adults on Earth eat chiles everyday. Chiles really are a _____

_____ In the United States, for example, people believe chiles can upset your stomach. But in Mexico, eating a whole Serrano chile is considered a great cure for a stomachache. Folk remedies aside, the nutritious chile has been scientifically shown to be an effective treatment for indigestion, colds, fever, and headaches, among other things.

Today we eat onions and other alliums to add flavor rather than to build strength. Each variety has something different to offer. For example shallots are small, mild onions that have a particularly delicate flavor, brought out by cooking._____, while pickled shallots are often included in Southeast Asian recipes.

Even stranger than the Western Yellow onions, _____. This pungent allium has been called snake’s food, stinking Jenny, and onion stinkers. Elephant garlic is more closely related to leeks than to garlic, despite its name, and it is actually quite mild.

Round onions can also be mild, but some varieties are sweet, and still others have a strong bite._____ The sweetest ones, Maui, Vidalia, and Walla Walla onions are also the juiciest and they are still mild enough to eat raw. However, the strongest ones, such as the Western yellow, have the highest levels of healthful compounds known as flavonoids.

Many Mediterranean dishes feature garlic or onions prominently. Some of these dishes use raw garlic and can be quite pungent, while other dishes are curiously mild. Bold Mediterranean foods include French aioli, a garlicky mayonnaise, and Italian pesto, a

blend of garlic, basil, and nuts. But the softer side of alliums comes through in dishes like French onion soup and “Chicken with forty cloves of garlic.” Once it is well cooked, and allium’s _____

With their mild sweet flavor, leeks have been prized by gourmets for thousands of years. Indeed, the first known cookbook, written by the Roman gourmet Apicius, contains several recipes for leeks. _____ Thus, the wealthy of ancient Rome ate leeks and shunned round onions.

While cutting onions releases their bite, cooking transforms their bite into something sweet. When heated, the sulfur compounds form different molecules that are fifty time sweeter than sugar. _____ When they have been well cooked, garlic and onions are mellow enough to be used as a main ingredient. In fact, this is often seen in Mediterranean cooking.

Today we eat onions and other alliums to add flavor rather than to build strength. Each variety has something different to offer. For example, shallots are small, mild onions that have a particularly delicate flavor, brought out by cooking. _____, while pickled shallots are often included in Southeast Asian recipes.

Koreans eat a dish similar to sauerkraut called kimichi. Kimichi is served at almost every Korean meal. While you can buy Kimchi at the market, most Koreans make their own. _____ Along with the pungent cabbage, they add a lot of ground chile and garlic to make it extra spicy.

Sometimes, the pungency on your plate comes from an innocent looking vegetable in your salad or a side dish. _____ The crucifers include cabbages, turnips, kale, mustard, greens and radishes. Cruciferous vegetables are not only popular for their pungency, they are also known to have many healthful properties.