OWIS

by Linda Vasquez

There are about 200 kinds of owls around the world.

Some of them are big. Some are small. The biggest owl in North

America is the great gray owl. It can be almost three feet long. The smallest owl is probably the elf owl.

It is about as heavy as a slice

Owls feed on small mammals, insects, birds, and snakes. They can catch an animal that flies, runs, or slithers. Some owls even catch fish. Most owls hunt at night.

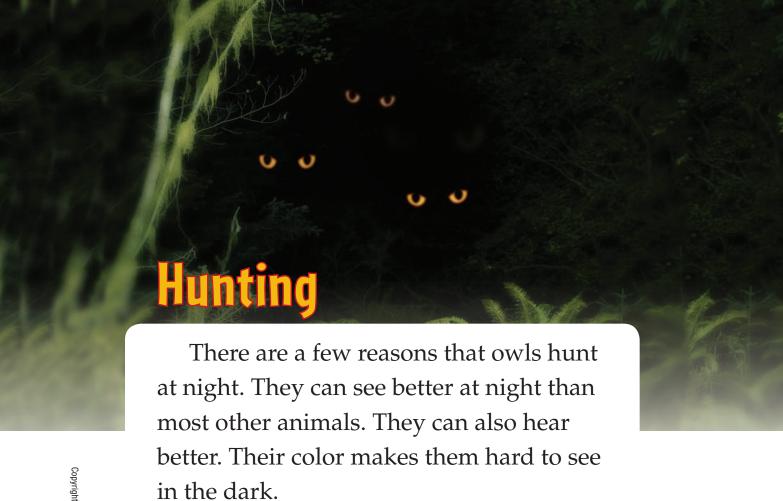
READ & RESPOND

of bread.

Text Structure

Copyright © by Houghton Mifflin Harcour

How are the great gray owl and the elf owl the same? How are they different?



An owl may wait on a perch until it hears or sees a small animal. When an owl flies, it is silent. A small animal cannot hear the owl as it swoops down.

What does an owl do after it sees a small animal?



Sight

Owls have very big eyes.
This helps them see in the dark. Most birds have eyes on the sides of their heads, but owls have eyes in the front.
They can see exactly how far away an animal is.

An owl cannot move its eyes. Instead, it moves its head. It can move its head to look backward, even while it is flying.

READ & RESPOND

Main Ideas and Details

What are some unusual things about an owl's eyes?

Hearing

If you look at an owl's face, you will see a circle of feathers around its eyes. These feathers send sounds into the owl's ears. It can hear sounds that people cannot.



Some owls' ears are at different places on each side of the head. They hear a sound in one ear a little sooner than in the other ear. This helps them know where an animal is. They use their ears the way we use our eyes!

Find two sentences that compare or contrast owls and people.



Feeding

An owl's beak is sharp. Its claws are, too, and they are long and strong. When it catches an animal, the owl crushes it with its claws and tears at it with its beak.

It swallows the animal whole. Later, it spits up a pellet with the fur and bones that remain.

What does an owl do after it catches an animal?

Owls do not build their nests. They may live in an old nest that another bird made. They may live in holes in trees, in ditches, or on ledges of buildings.

Baby owls are called owlets. The eggs do not hatch at the same time, so the owlets in a family may be different sizes. Owlets get very hungry. If there are owlets near you, you might hear them squeak all night as they ask for food.



READ & RESPOND

Text Structure

What causes the owlets to be different sizes?

Copyright © by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company



Who Gives a Hoot?

While the neighborhood dozes, owls are busy. You may have heard one hoot during the night. Or maybe you have heard an owl screech, or even whistle.

In the past, some people thought owls were very wise. Other people thought that they brought bad luck.

People today still find owls mysterious. But one thing we know for sure is that owls help get rid of pests.

How do people feel about owls?

Main Ideas and Details

Copyright © by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.



Reread and Respond

1	Write in order the events that happen when an owl goes hunting.	Hint For clues, see pages 211 and 214.
2	Name two ways all owls are alike.	Hint For clues, reread the story.
3	What kinds of noises do owls make?	Hint For clues, see pages 215 and 216.