

READ THE PASSAGE Visualize what you read about giraffes.

Giants of the Grasslands

Being 16 feet (5 m) tall can be a good thing. Giraffes can see far across the grasslands of Africa, where they live. They can be on the alert for hungry lions. Their height makes it easy to reach treetops for food.

To get enough food, giraffes have to eat nearly all day long. They eat about 75 pounds (34 kg) of leaves every day. Giraffes like to eat the thorny leaves of one kind of tree. Their saliva is amazing. It is thick like paste and protects their mouths from the thorns. And their thick lips act like cushions. A giraffe's tongue is interesting, too. It's about 20 inches (50 cm) long. The tongue is a dark blue-black color, so the hot sun does not burn it. The tongue wraps around food and grabs it the way you use your fingers and hand.

A big animal like a giraffe needs a big heart to pump blood through its body. A giraffe's heart weighs about 25 pounds (11 kg). And that's about the size of a beagle. Everything about a giraffe is big!

SKILL PRACTICE Read the item. Write your response.

1. What is a giraffe's main predator? How do you know?

2. Why do giraffes have paste-like saliva and thick lips?

3. What does a giraffe spend most of its time doing? Why?

STRATEGY PRACTICE Underline sentences in the passage that were easy to visualize.