

# Georges Brossard, Entomologist Extraordinaire

(July 2019)

Georges Brossard passed away on June 26, 2019. Who was Georges Brossard, you might ask? He was a Canadian entomologist who founded the Montreal Insectarium. However, Georges was so much more. Of course, he liked insects. In fact, he liked them so much, he gave up a successful career in law to travel around the world and collect more than 250,000 specimens. That collection has since become one of Montreal's most famous—and most visited—attractions.

Georges was born in 1940 in Quebec. As a child, he was inspired by a science class to start collecting insects. In a cupboard in that very class, there were two specimens for the students to study, one of which was a butterfly. He looked at it for hours at a time. That's when he knew he was interested in insects.

Georges collected bugs throughout his youth, but sadly that collection was destroyed by ants and spiders. However, this didn't deter Georges, but inspired him to keep collecting. He explained that seeing his collection in ruins hit him "like a bolt of lightning," and it was at that moment he knew he was going to become a great international collector. It just took him a while to get there. At first, Georges went on to study law, but

by his late 30s, it was time for a career change. He was going to focus on his passions: entomology and the environment. Along with his wife, Suzanne, and their three children, Georges traveled all over the planet. By 1985, he had 250,000 insects from more than 100 countries.

“I told myself that of all the animals on Earth, insects must certainly be the ones that do the most for humans. They produce honey, silk, wax, shellac, and dyes. They pollinate plants. And yet they are the most hated animals, the most misunderstood. We hunt them down with insecticides and fungicides. That’s why I decided to stick up for them. At first, I wanted a huge collection with all the insects in the world.”

As part of his campaign to stick up for insects, Georges approached the then-mayor of Montreal and told him about his wish to create an insectarium. The mayor was on board and put Georges in touch with the director of the Montreal Botanical Garden. Together, they raised funds toward the goal, and in 1987, Georges donated his insect collection to the city. A permanent exhibition at the botanical garden site opened in February 1990. Together with the biodome, planetarium, and botanical garden, the insectarium saw an impressive 2.2 million visitors in 2017 alone.

When talking about Georges’ life, one particular event has to be mentioned. In 1987, the Children’s Wish Foundation contacted Georges about six-year-old David Marenger who

collected butterflies. David had been diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. His last wish was to capture a Blue Morpho, one of the largest butterflies in the world. Georges was determined to make that happen and took David to Mexico, carrying the ailing child through the rainforests on his shoulders. They eventually found one of the beautiful butterflies. However, the most amazing part of the story is that when David returned home, his cancer went into remission, and he began to get better. The story was the inspiration for the film, *The Blue Butterfly*. Georges would continue helping children who are disadvantaged for the rest of his life.

Now, with Georges' passing, it is up to future entomologists to carry on his legacy and teach humans how much they can learn from insects—which Georges did so well.

#### **Teacher Resources – Vocabulary**

*Potential Words for Further Study:* These words not only help with comprehension of the passage, they also appear more frequently in a wide spectrum of reading, especially in academic text. Therefore, further study of the meaning of these words may be beneficial. The words on this list can be incorporated into subsequent lessons.

#### **Wilson Reading System® Vocabulary Level: AB**

exhibition (n) a public show or display, as of art, industrial products, athletic feats, etc.

terminal (adj) designating, of, or having a fatal disease in its final stages

*Words for Quick Discussion:* Consider discussing these words as they are encountered to help students comprehend the passage. A quick discussion in student-friendly language while reading the text is best.

#### **Wilson Reading System® Vocabulary Level: B**

botanical (adj) of plants and plant life

deter (v) to keep or discourage (a person, group, or nation) from doing something by instilling fear, anxiety, doubt, etc.

remission (n) a relatively prolonged lessening or disappearance of the symptoms of a disease

shellac (n) a kind of natural varnish which is painted on to wood to give it a shiny surface

specimen (n) a single plant or animal which is an example of a particular species or type and is examined by scientists

**Definition Source:** Collins English Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english>

**Text Easability:**

**Text Easability Scores**

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1. Visit the Coh-Metrix Text Easability Assessor website at <http://tea.cohmetrix.com/>. If you do not already have a login and password, create one. It is free and easy to sign up for access to the website.
2. Once you have created an account and sign in, you will be taken to a page with an empty, white text box. Copy and paste the text from this passage into the empty, white text box. Make sure you are only copying and pasting the body of the passage. Do not include the title, date, or any of the resources present in the passage.
3. When you have pasted the passage into the text box, click on the red button beneath the text box that says "Analyze." There will be a short delay and after a few seconds, you will see a bar graph appear to the right of the screen.
4. The bar graph will give you the percentages for several text characteristics including: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion.
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6. Lastly, a paragraph is provided that explains the meaning of the measurements of the text characteristics for your particular passage.
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