Portuguese Man o' War

(December 2019)

People assume the Portuguese man o' war is a jellyfish. Yes, it is related, but it is not a jellyfish. A man o' war is something called a siphonophore. A siphonophore is not just one living thing — it is a bunch of living things, or clones. These clones adhere to one another. They cannot survive on their own and must work together.

A man o' war is made up of four kinds of clones. They are stuck together under a balloon-like bladder that is full of gas. The gas bladder is see-through, but has a soft pink, blue, or purple tint. It can be anywhere from three to 11 inches long and can rise about five inches above the water. It is full of carbon dioxide, nitrogen, oxygen, and argon. If a man o' war comes under attack, it can shrink its gas bladder, letting its clones hide under the water. It is this distinct gas bladder that gives the man o' war its

name. That is because the balloon-like body part looks like an 18th century Portuguese warship.

Along with the clones hanging from the gas bladder, there are also tentacles — a lot of them! The clones and tentacles make up strands that grow 30 to 100 feet long. They hold small pods filled with tubes that are full of spikes and carry toxic venom. The man o' war uses the toxic venom to stun and kill small fish and shellfish. For people, the venom is less risky, but it stings and can cause skin welts.

There are a number of treatments for such stings, and everyone thinks they have the best one. Some people use vinegar, while others use an ammonia and water mix. These are followed by shaving the spot with a razor. One must wash the blades between each stroke to get rid of any leftover tubes. Hot packs are put on the skin to help get rid of toxins. None of the methods are fun, and they all take a long time to kick in.

The Portuguese man o' war is a carnivore that uses its tentacles to hunt and kill food. It has few predators, except for the loggerhead turtle which snacks on the man o' war. These brave reptiles have thick skin on their tongues and throats, so toxic tentacles and venom pose no risk. Other predators are the blue sea slug and ocean sunfish. This just goes to show that even the most intimidating animals have opponents — even those that look like a warship.

Teacher Resources

Please note: this non-controlled readable text passage features a ***description text structure***. As such, it is written to be ***at least 80% decodable at Substep 4.2***. A specific decodability score is listed below.

- This text passage is 80.05% decodable at Substep 4.2.

Text Easability Scores

If you would like to measure the text easability scores of this passage, please follow the directions below.

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.
5. Below the bar graph, the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level is also included for your benefit.
6. Lastly, a paragraph is provided that explains the meaning of the measurements of the text characteristics for your particular passage.
7. Once you have completed measuring your passage, you can click on the "Clear" button below the text box and measure another passage, if you wish.

This text passage is archived under *Animals.*

