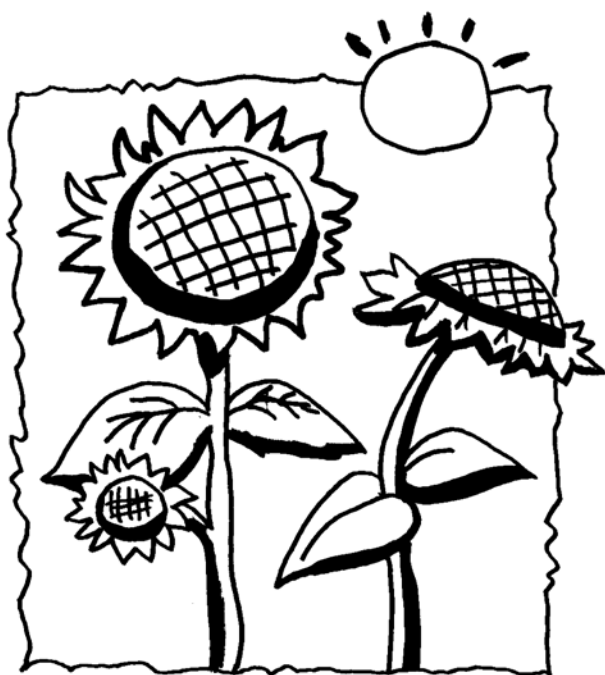

The Amazing Sunflower



The sunflower is truly an amazing plant. It has inspired writers such as William Blake and Oscar Wilde and painters such as George Dunlop Leslie and Vincent Van Gogh. It has inspired more than one filmmaker to catch the movements of an entire field of sunflowers as their magnificent, yellow flower heads move in unison as they follow the sun in its travels across the sky from dawn until dusk, the entire journey compressed into only a few moments by the magic of time-lapse photography. This trait of following the sun's movement is called heliotropism.

The sunflower, native to North America, is now cultivated world wide with, Antarctica the only continent where it is not grown. Native peoples of North America began cultivating the sunflower

over 5000 years ago. They found this versatile plant could provide them with a variety of useful products. By pounding or grinding, the seeds were turned into flour and used to make bread. Oil, also used in bread making, was obtained by squeezing the seeds. The native people enjoyed eating the seeds as a healthy snack food.

However, the sunflower provided many products which were not used in food applications. Native Americans also used the oil of the sunflower for hair grooming. Purple and yellow dyes were made from sunflowers and used as a body paint and a way to decorate textiles and baskets. The dried stalks, being light and strong, were ideal for use as a building material. The sunflower was also used by Native Americans for a variety of medicinal purposes including tonics, dressing for wounds and treating snakebites.

Today there are over sixty varieties of sunflowers which are used to produce a wide range of products for both human and animal consumption. Sunflower oil for cooking is obtained by pressing the seeds. The pulpy material which is left after the pressing is called "press cake" and is used to make feed for livestock. The sunflower seeds, make an excellent snack food when roasted or even when raw. The entire seed is often used in commercial bird seed mixtures for domestic and wild birds. Many people enjoy the various healthy types of breads produced from the flour made by grinding sunflower seeds.

Industry uses sunflower oil in the production of paint, varnishes, soaps, candles, lubricants and many other products. However, remembering how beautiful the sunflower looks, what gardener wouldn't love to have some of these tall, showy plants to beautify his or her garden?



Follow Up Activities

1. Explain the term "heliotropism."

2. Give seven examples of how the Native Americans used the sunflower.

3. Explain why the sunflower is such a versatile plant.

4. Find synonyms in the story for the words listed below.

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------|----------------|-------|
| (a) cloth | _____ | (e) motivated | _____ |
| (b) uses | _____ | (f) grand | _____ |
| (c) made | _____ | (g) trip | _____ |
| (d) grew | _____ | (h) indigenous | _____ |

5. Find four three syllable words in the story and write them in the blanks below.

- (a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____ (d) _____

6. Find four four-syllable words in the story and write them in the blanks below.

- (a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____ (d) _____

7. Find one five syllable word and write it in this blank. _____



8. Tell what you learned from reading The Amazing Sunflower. Use information from the story along with your own ideas to support your answer.

9. Tell what the main idea of the story is.

10. Read the sentences below. Find the underlined word in each sentence and in the space provided tell what type of word it is and explain your reasoning.

(a) The sunflower is truly an amazing plant.

(b) The sunflower has inspired more than one filmmaker.

(c) Industry uses sunflower oil in the production of paint, varnishes, soaps, candles, lubricants and many other products.

(d) The sunflower seeds when roasted or even when raw make an excellent snack food.



11. Tell whether the story The Amazing Sunflower is fiction or non-fiction. Explain your reasons for the choice you made.

12. Tell what "press cake" is.

13. Explain how sunflower oil is used by industry today.

14. Find four compound words in the story and write them in the spaces provided below.

15. Word Criss Cross Puzzle
Use the clues below to find the appropriate word in the story. Place one letter in each circle so that all of the words fit into the puzzle. Some letters are placed in the puzzle to help you.

Clues:

- (a) made smaller
- (b) amazing plant
- (c) a continent
- (d) nearby star
- (e) antonym for short
- (f) stems
- (g) colourful liquid
- (h) humans

