



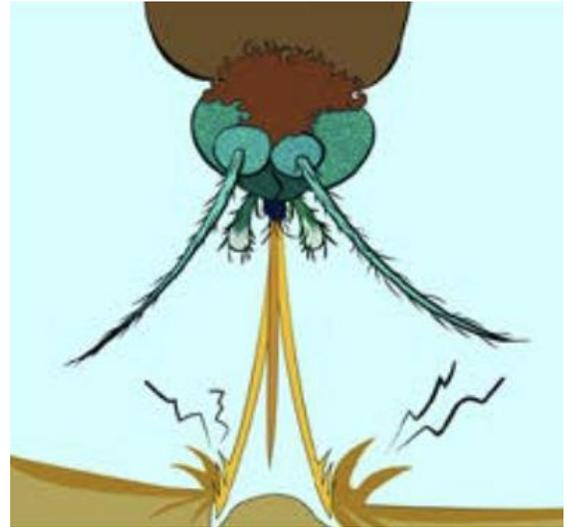
# Ode to the Proboscis

## A Literary Piece

Learners will enjoy listening to several genres of literature about mosquitos and then have the opportunity to design and create an accompanying poem, song, or dramatic play to share with others.

### Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to integrate literature and creative writing into the study of mosquito habitats. This activity increases vocabulary and promotes creativity while reinforcing key concepts about the importance of reducing the risk of mosquito borne **disease** in your community.



### Time

- 45-60 minutes
- (Add 30 minutes for optional read aloud of *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*)

### Materials

- A combination of nonfiction and fiction literature selections, such as:
  - *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* by Verna Aardema
  - *The Mosquito (Disgusting Critters)* by Elise Gravel
  - *Mr. Mosquito Puts on His Tuxedo* by Barbara Olenyik Morrow
  - *Mosquito* by Virginia Kroll
- "Ode to the Proboscis" poem (included in this activity)

### What to Do

1. Discuss the key words listed in this document and read the "Ode to the Proboscis" poem.
2. Choose two types of literature to share with your learners. Make sure one is non-fiction.
3. After reading or listening to the selections, have learners make a list of Fascinating Mosquito Facts. These may be done on chart paper or large white board, as a group, or in individual observation journals, or any option of your choice.

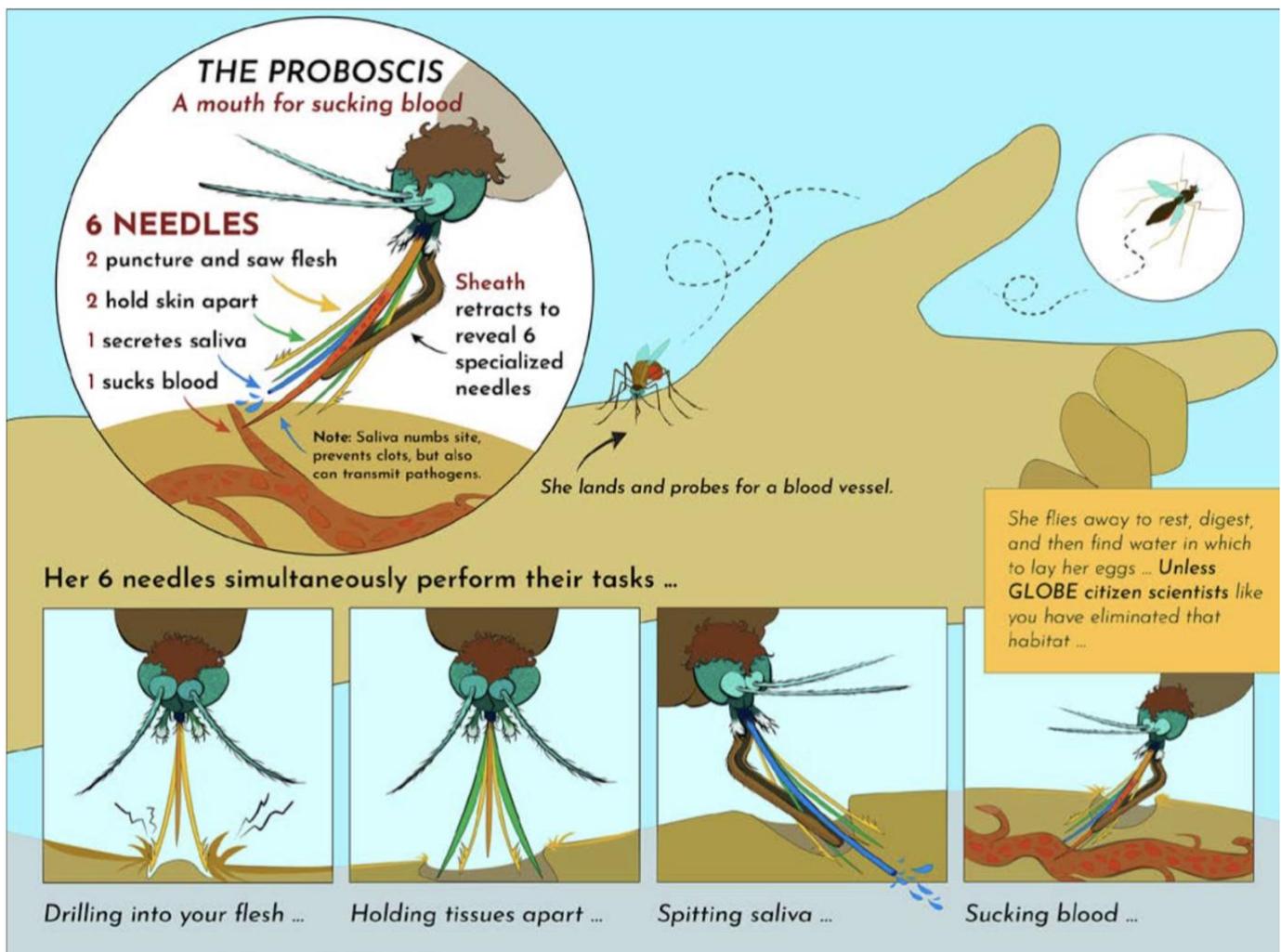
- Learners will now write a short poem, song, story or skit, including the mosquito's habitat and two other facts they have learned to share with others.

## Questions for Review

- What is the main function of a mosquito's proboscis and why can this be dangerous to people and animals?
- What alerts people and animals to know mosquitoes are nearby?
- What do you think attracts mosquitoes to bite people?

## Modifications and Extensions

- Depending on the age range of your learners, you may wish to partner an older learner with a younger learner for the writing/skit portion.
- This activity could be turned into a puppet show, video, or other production to share with families.
- For older campers use the following infographic to learn additional detailed information about a mosquito's proboscis.



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## Key Words

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**Disease:** illness or sickness that prevents the body from functioning normally

**Proboscis:** the elongated tube-shaped mouthpart used to gather food. The female mosquito also uses the proboscis to gather blood from humans and other mammals, as well as birds, reptiles, and amphibians. *Pro-* means “forward” and *-boscis* means “to feed.”

**Saliva:** a complex mixture of proteins that allows the mosquito to get blood protein when it bites a person or animal. The saliva from a bite may cause a bump, and other reactions.

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## Ode to the Proboscis

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Mosquitoes have a mouth  
since after all, they need to eat.  
But the mouth of every female  
poses risks to all she meets.

In her mouth are found six needles  
Wait...SIX NEEDLES?? You may scream!  
Why does she need six needles?  
Six needles seems extreme!

First, two will hold your skin apart,  
two sharper ones will saw,  
they're heading for a blood vein –  
it's your blood she wants to draw.

She is such a caring mother.  
She's not trying to be mean.  
But her eggs cannot develop  
without using blood protein.

So, needle five sucks up your blood,  
to her abdomen it goes.  
You will hardly know it's happening  
'cause mosquitoes are such pros.

The sixth one spits saliva  
that contains a lot of stuff.  
Some contents to numb the area,  
other make blood clotting tough.

The tiny loss of blood  
is not at all the greatest threat.  
It's the many bad diseases  
that a human just might get.

Along with their saliva –  
every now and every then –  
she may also leave behind  
a dangerous pathogen.

A human could be the receiver  
of the virus for yellow fever.

Others, meanwhile,  
could get West Nile.

Add to the hysteria  
the chance of getting malaria.

The diseases are a problem  
that YOU can help reduce.  
Find the places where she lays her eggs  
And turn that water loose.

But how cool is the proboscis?  
Pretty cool, you must admit.  
Mosquitoes are the only ones  
who simultaneously suck and spit.

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## Acknowledgements

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