

# Fleas Among Us



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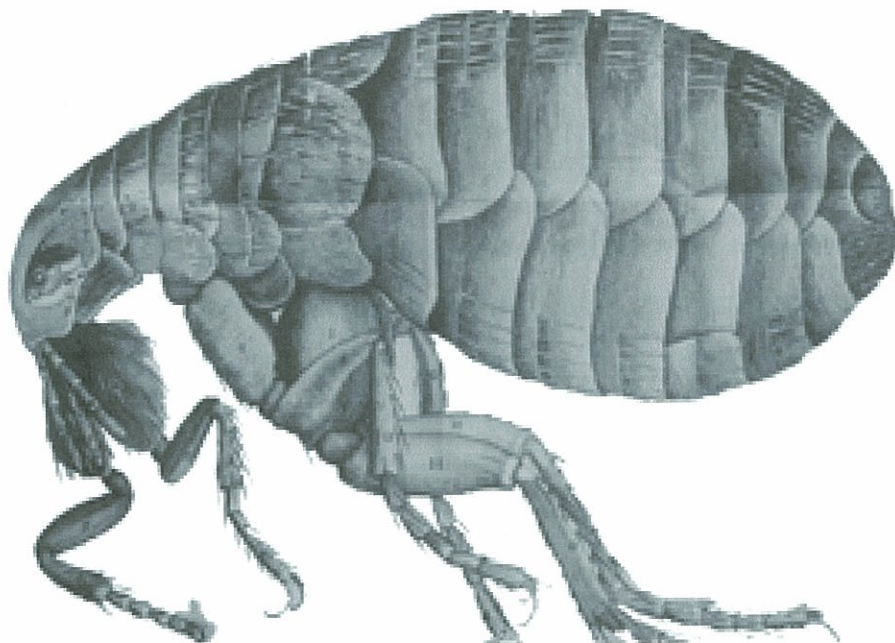
## Preface

FLEAS are a very diverse group that can be found all over the world, with more than 2,000 different species of fleas found worldwide. They live on a wide variety of hosts and they can develop large populations in a short period of time. Around 94% of fleas will be found on mammals and about 5% will be found on birds. The most commonly found flea is the cat flea (*Ctenocephalides felis*).

Fleas are considered external parasites, since it is dependent on its host for a blood meal. Fleas can infest such areas as homes, barns and bird cages. Both males and female fleas bite and suck blood. The bite often leaves an itchy, red spot. Secondary infections can be caused by scratching the flea bite, especially in children.

Fleas are considered a health concern, since they are able to spread many diseases to humans. Fleas, such as *Ctenocephalides felis* and *Xenopsylla cheopis*, transmit murine typhus and plague to humans and companion animals. Murine typhus is common in South Texas and it has been a reportable disease in Texas for 40 years. The plague bacterium has been found in the western two-thirds of Texas in populations of squirrels, prairie dogs, rats, and mice, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. These animals act as reservoirs for this bacterium. They allow the bacterium to be transmitted to humans and companion animals, if they are bitten by an infected flea.

In this booklet are a series of exercises to assist with educating your students about fleas and various methods that can be used to decrease flea populations.



## Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b>	Page 2
<b><u>Lesson 1</u></b>	
Exercise 1: Reading	Page 3
Supplemental Activity: Flea Word Puzzle	Page 6
<b><u>Lesson 2</u></b>	
Exercise 2: Flea Double Puzzle	Page 9
Supplemental Activity: Flea Word Search	Page 11
<b><u>Lesson 3</u></b>	
Exercise 3: Color Page	Page 13
Supplemental Activity: “I Spy Flea Habitats”	Page 15
<b><u>Lesson 4</u></b>	
Exercise 4: Crossword	Page 18
<b><u>Lesson 5</u></b>	
Exercise 5: Double Puzzle	Page 23
Supplemental Activity: Flea Maze	Page 25
<b>Vocabulary Words</b>	Page 26

