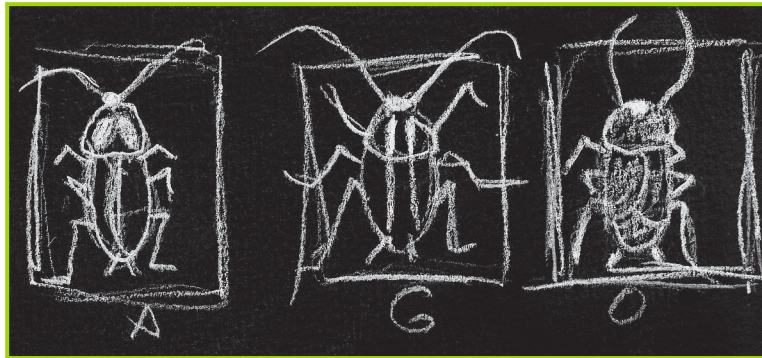


COCKROACH SCHOOL AND THE BIGFOOT MONSTERS



Gregory L. Vogt, Ed.D.

Baylor
College of
Medicine

Teacher Resources from the
Center for Educational Outreach at
Baylor College of Medicine

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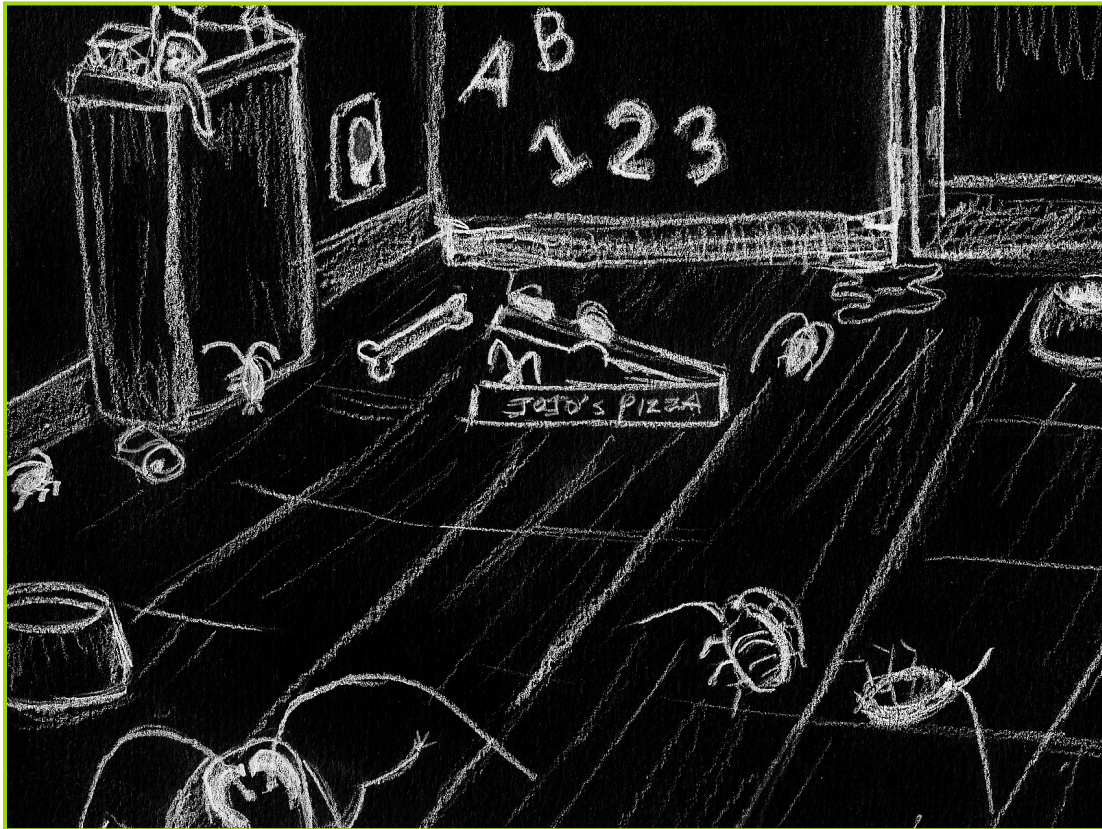
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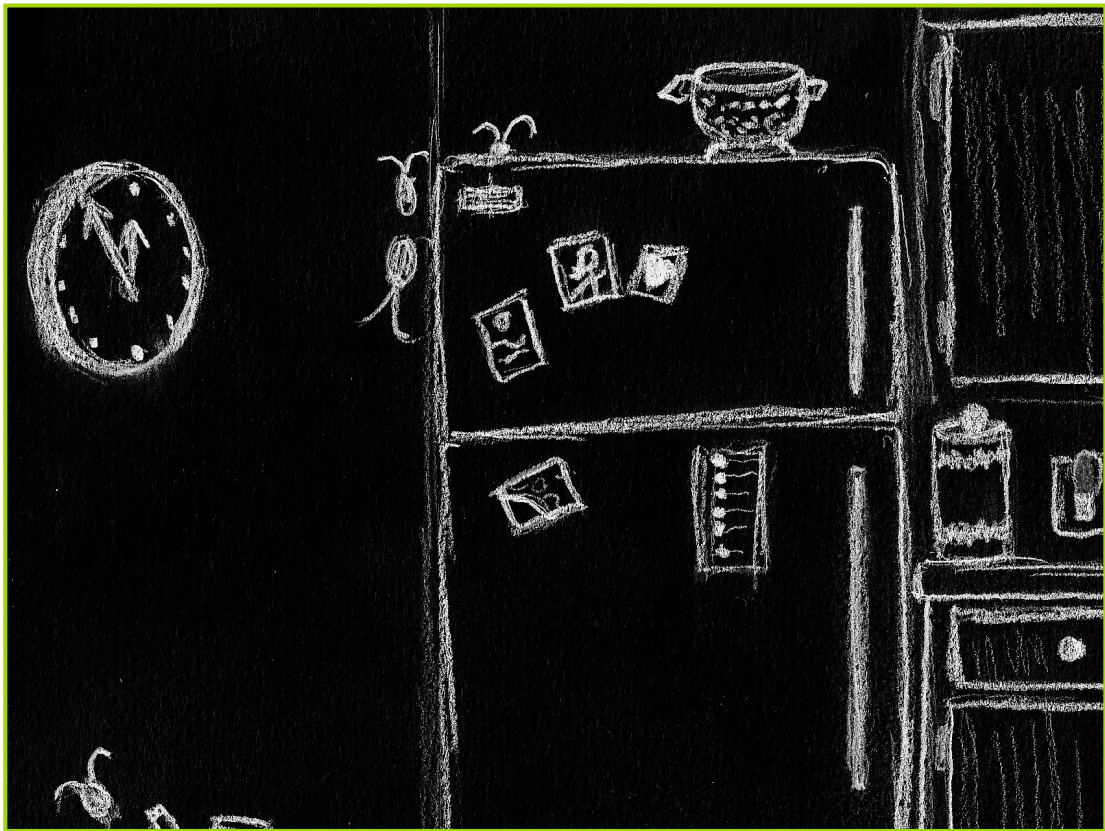
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Cockroach School and the Bigfoot Monsters



Running, jumping, dashing, bumping, smacking and general chaos filled the darkened space. Students were scattered about, some scooting in high places, some scrambling below, some hiding in corners, some munching on food, and some lying on their backs

with all six feet waving in the air. The beginner class at Cockroach School was about to start.

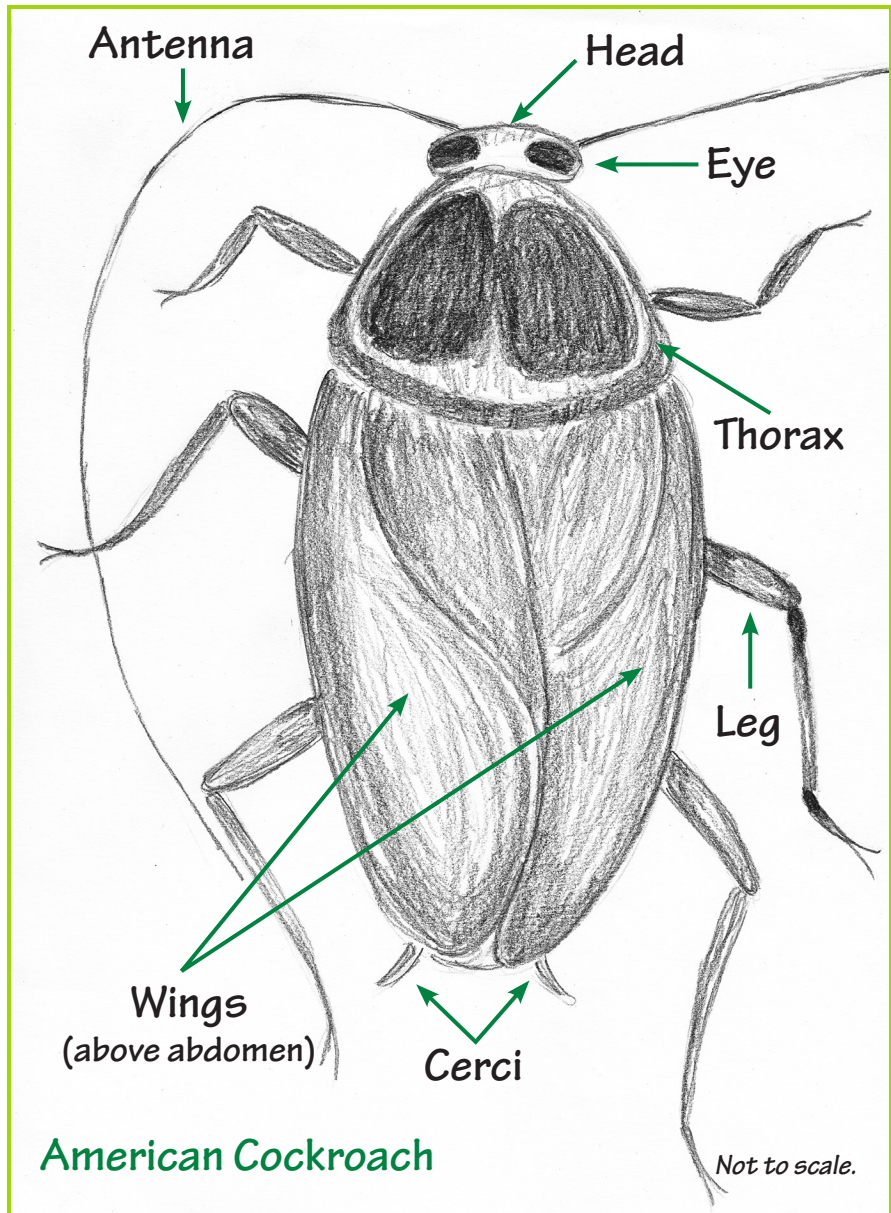


The students were excited to discover the “ins” and “outs” of being successful roaches. There was much to learn.



About 2 inches long

Did you know
American roaches
are more active when
the temperature is
above 70°?



Students came from all over, and in all sizes. The giant American cockroaches (*Periplaneta americana*, or palmetto bug) were more than an inch long.

Size

About
1/2-5/8
inches long



*Did you know
German roaches
will feed on almost
anything, including
soap, glue and
toothpaste?*



German Cockroach

Not to scale.

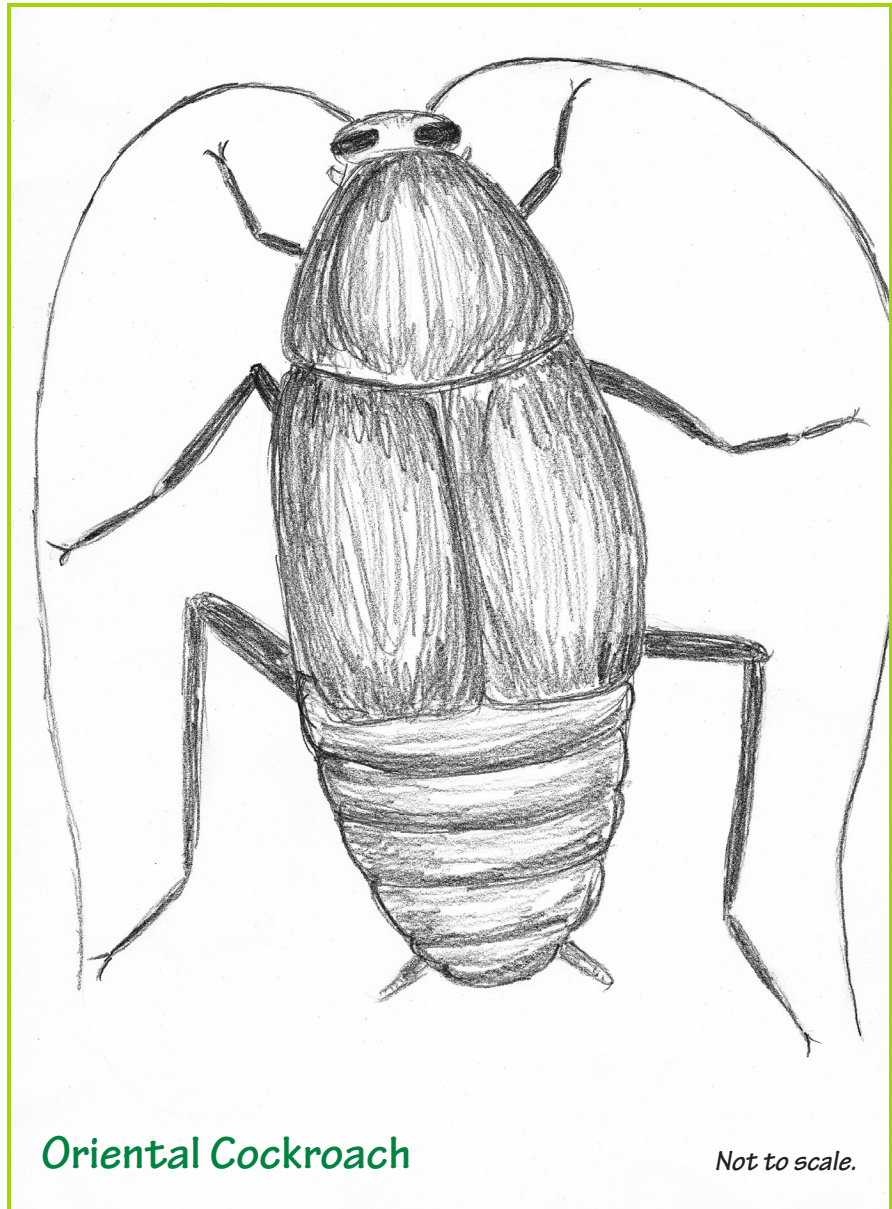
Much smaller were the German cockroaches (*Blattella germanica*). There were two dark stripes on the thorax of each one.

Size

About
1 inch
long



*Did you know Oriental
roaches can survive
outdoors in freezing
temperatures?*



Oriental Cockroach

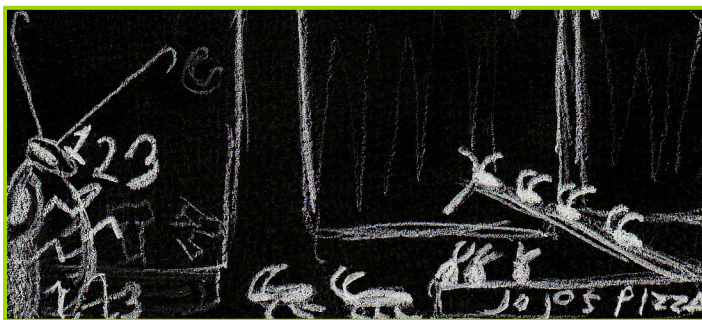
Not to scale.

The Oriental cockroaches (*Blatta orientalis*) were somewhere in between. As long as there was plenty of food, all three varieties would get along and pretty much ignore each other.

When the old Professor arrived, all of the roaches stopped what they were doing. He was an exceptionally large palmetto bug, almost two and one-half inches long. Including his antenna, he was just over four inches long!



Climbing on to an old chicken bone, the Professor signaled for the students to gather around. There was much jostling, but eventually, all the roaches



gathered in three areas.

The big American roaches shoved their way to the front of a pizza box. Inside the box were the Oriental roaches, and crawling up on the lid were the Germans.



The Professor began.

“Cockroaches, big and small, welcome to cockroach school! Today, you will learn what it is to be a roach. You

will learn about food, places to hide, where to find water, and how to avoid the bigfoot monsters that always try to step on us.”

There was a general flutter among the circles of students. Just hearing the name, “bigfoot,” was terrifying.

“We shall begin,” said the Professor, “with the basic survival techniques. Does anyone know the three basic things a cockroach needs to survive?”

Antennae began waving in various directions.



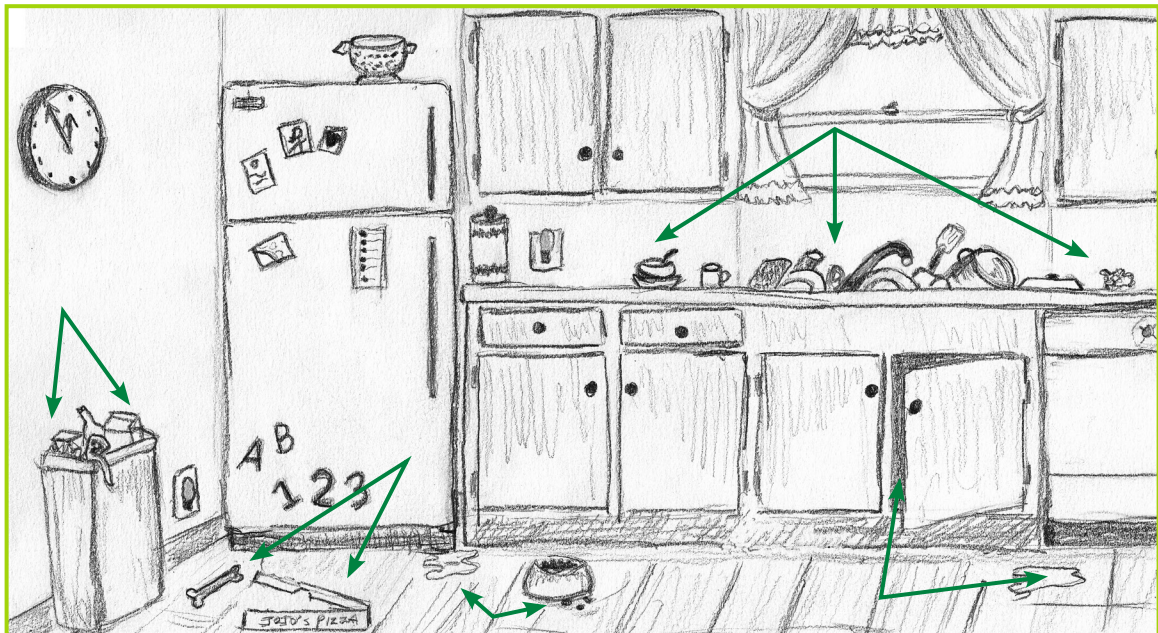
The Professor

pointed a front foot at one roach. “Food,” the Oriental roach called

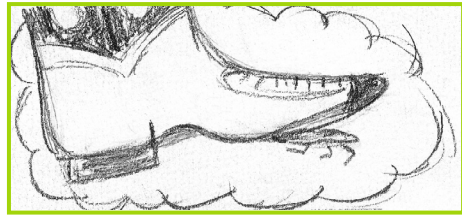
out. Another roach, unsure of the answer, said “water?” A German roach from the back yelled, “shelter!”

Before the Professor could continue, an American roach asked, “What about darkness?” The professor replied, “Yes, yes. Darkness is good. We can survive in the light, but darkness is good.”

The Professor explained, “The best place for roaches is where sloppy bigfoot monsters live. They drop food scraps, and there are plenty of water drops to drink. And...” the professor paused, “there

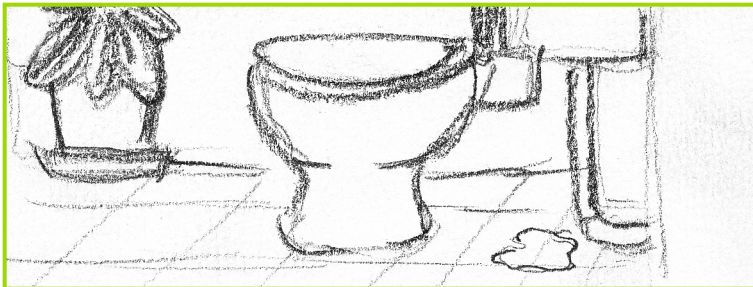


are hiding places everywhere. Dark, damp cracks that only we can slip into. Yes, bigfoot monsters are scary, but life is good if you can avoid being SQUASHED!”



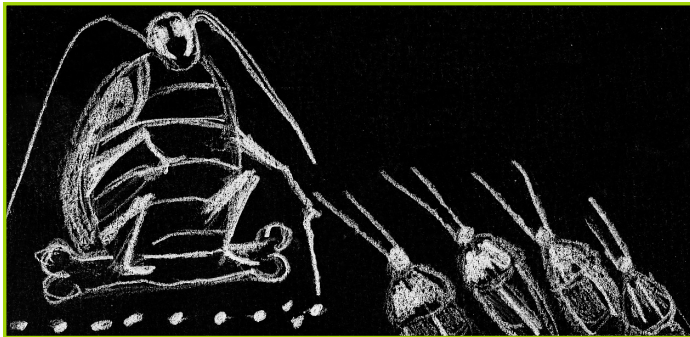
The Professor always said that last part very loudly so the students would remember. And as usual, his entering class of roaches jumped and covered at the thought of being squashed. The Professor chuckled to himself, thinking, “That old scare tactic works every time.” He began again.

“Of the three things we need to survive, water is most important. We roaches can only last about a week without water. Look for dark, damp places to drink in safety. In bigfoot monster homes, water flows through long, round plastic tunnels. Sometimes, these water tunnels leak. The water drops are very good there.”



All the young roaches held up their antennae and watched the Professor intently with their compound eyes.

“Food is always plentiful, but you have to know where to look. When you find a good food source, you have to mark it so you can find it again later. Remember, it’s going to be dark. The best way to



mark a spot is to barf and poop near the food, and then leave a barf-poop trail behind you.”

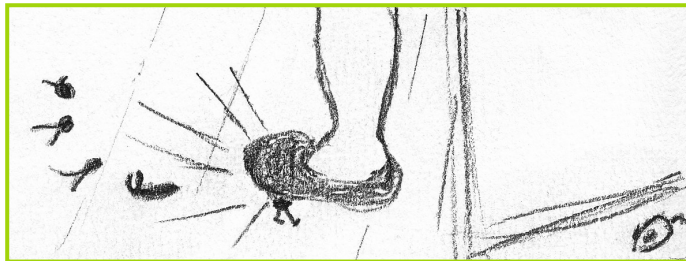
The students laughed and rustled their wings at the Professor’s mention of barf and poop.

“Your antennae,” the Professor went on, “will detect the scent from your barf and poop, and lead you back to the food.”

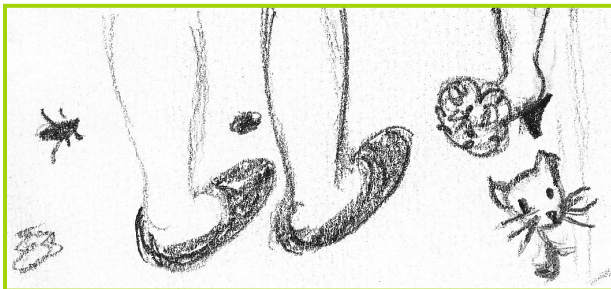
Just as the Professor was about to mention the best kinds of foods, a blinding white light filled the classroom. All the roaches were momentarily stunned. Then came a horrifying sound. A bigfoot monster! The roaches scattered madly, seeking places to

hide as the monster slammed down again and again. Most escaped, but a few slow ones were squashed.

A second, smaller bigfoot monster appeared and asked the first, “What happened dear?”



“Ahhh, it’s them roaches again. There were a whole bunch this time,” the first monster replied.



“We’ll have to call the exterminator again.”

“Why? That didn’t work. They’re back worse than ever. Tomorrow, I’m

going to get some roach killer spray. See how they like that.”

“Well, come back to bed honey.”

“I will. But first, I’m going to have a sandwich. That’s why I came down here in the first place.”

After a while, the bright white light went away, and the roaches cautiously emerged from their hiding places. They found peanut butter and jelly smears on the counter, small chunks of bread on the floor, and a puddle of sugar drink that seemed as big as a lake.

Class dismissed! It was cockroach *party time!*

