

A close-up photograph of a bright yellow snake with a textured, scaly surface. The snake is coiled around several thick, green reeds or stalks. The background is dark, making the yellow snake and green reeds stand out. The snake's head is raised and turned to the left, showing its eye and nostrils.

# Slithery Snakes!



## Talk About It

When you hear the word “snake” what do you think of? What are some facts that you know about snakes?



Find out more about snakes at [www.macmillanmh.com](http://www.macmillanmh.com)

# Poisonous SNAKES

by Thomas Kane

## Vocabulary

species	surroundings
survive	prey
alert	predators
vibrates	lunging

## Context Clues

**Context Clues** are words or phrases that can help you figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. For example, you might figure out that *species* means *kinds* after reading the third sentence of this selection.

There are about 130 different **species** of snakes found in the United States and Canada. Many people are afraid of snakes because they think they are poisonous. However, only four kinds of poisonous snakes live in the United States. One, the coral snake, is in the cobra family. The other three snakes belong to the pit viper family. A bite from a poisonous snake can kill a person. However, most people bitten by snakes **survive** if they are treated quickly.

All snakes have some characteristics in common. For example, none of them hear well. Instead, they are constantly aware and **alert** for times when the ground **vibrates**, or shakes slightly. They feel, rather than hear, something coming.

**copperhead snake**



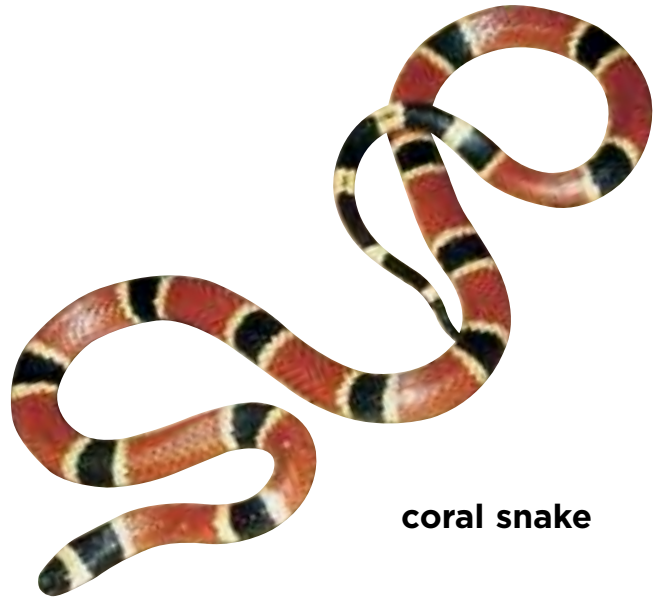
Snakes also have a keen sense of smell. They use their tongues to pick up smells from the air. They sort out these smells to find out whether an animal in their nearby **surroundings** is **prey**. Snakes are **predators** that hunt other animals for food. Snakes usually eat small animals, sometimes swallowing them whole.

## Coral Snakes

Coral snakes live in the southern part of the United States. Their shiny red, yellow, and black bands make them easy to spot. A coral snake has a small head. You can see its fangs at the front of its mouth. When a coral snake bites, it shoots poison into its prey. The animal soon stops breathing and dies.

## Pit Vipers

A pit viper is named for the two large pits or dents on each side of its head. When both pits feel the same temperature, the pit viper knows it is facing its prey



coral snake

and it springs forward. **Lunging**, the viper digs its fangs into the animal. The poisonous bite causes bleeding and swelling that leads to death.

The three types of pit vipers in the United States are rattlesnakes, copperheads, and cottonmouths. Copperheads and cottonmouths are sometimes called moccasins.

Pit vipers live in the southeastern United States, the West, and the Midwest.

## Reread for Comprehension



### Summarize

#### Main Idea and Details

A Main Idea Web helps you decide which information is important to include in a summary. Use your Main Idea Web as you reread “Poisonous Snakes” to summarize the main idea and the important details of the selection.

