

## Reading Selection

## Crickets: A Closer Look

You probably recognize the cheerful chirping of crickets at night. But have you ever looked at a cricket up close? Crickets are insects. An insect's body is divided into three main parts: the head, the midsection (or **thorax**), and the abdomen. Look at your own crickets to identify these parts.

You have a **house cricket** in your terrarium. Attached to the house cricket's head are the eyes, the chewing mouth parts, and the antennae. (Use your hand lens to get a closeup look.) The antennae are almost as long as the cricket's whole body. They tell the insect about the feel, taste, smell, humidity, and temperature of the world outside.

Attached to the cricket's thorax you will find four wings. These will give you clues about your cricket's age. A very young cricket, or **nymph**, has no wings at all. A larger adolescent (teenage) cricket has very short wings. And the largest crickets, the adults, have full-grown wings.

Although the house cricket's wings are weak, they do have a purpose: chirping. But only the

adult males can chirp. The sound comes from scraping one wing against another. Why do you think male crickets chirp?

**Mighty Jumpers**

Also attached to the thorax are the cricket's mighty legs. Count them. Notice that each pair is different. Which are the most powerful? Crickets can jump about 60 cm (2 ft). Let's compare that with how far a person could jump if he or she had the cricket's strength. A 180-cm (6-foot) tall person who had the same ability as a cricket would be able to jump 4,320 cm (144 ft)!

On the back section, or **abdomen**, look for more clues to your cricket's identity. Both males and females have two spines called **cerci** projecting out of the rear of the abdomen. Crickets use these to sense vibrations in the air and ground. But only the adult female has a third projection: a longer, dark, needlelike projection, or **ovipositor**. She uses it to place her eggs in the ground.

FEMALE CRICKET

