

*Read the following article and answer the questions.*

## Blue Claw!

Do you know what a crab looks like? Perhaps you have seen one down at the Hudson **River**. Which of these pictures shows a crab?



*Picture #1*



*Picture #2*



*Picture #3*

If you guessed **Picture #3**, you would be right. This is a grownup blue crab, also called a blue-claw crab. Its two front legs are big claws for catching food and fighting off **predators**. Its two back legs are paddles for swimming. The crab uses its other six legs to walk over the river bottom.

If you guessed **Picture #2**, you would also be right. This is a very young blue crab. As the crab gets older, the tail will curve under its belly and stick there.

Guess what? The odd creature in **Picture #1** is also a blue crab—a tiny baby that just hatched from an egg. You need a **microscope** to see it.

To grow and change form, crabs **molt** many times. To molt means to shed the shell covering its body and legs. After molting, a crab feels like soft rubber. It takes in water, growing larger. Then a new shell hardens on its body and legs.

In a blue crab's life cycle, the baby in **Picture #1** molts about 7 times to become the youngster in **Picture #2**. After one more molt, this youngster looks like a tiny adult. To grow big enough to lay eggs, it molts at least 20 more times!



*The crab on the top has just molted. Below is its old empty shell. The crab's body is soft after molting. At this time, the crab grows bigger.*

1. Including claws and paddles, how many legs does a blue crab have?
2. As a crab **molts**, which of the following things happen?
  - a. Its body grows larger.
  - b. It sheds its shell.
  - c. Its body becomes soft.
  - d. All of the above things happen.
3. The blue crab's large claws are used for
  - a. catching food and defending itself.
  - b. swimming.
  - c. walking.
  - d. molting.
4. According to the article, which of the following sentences are true?
  - a. Blue crabs can swim. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. When molting, the body of a blue crab may change form. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. A tiny baby blue crab looks like its parents. \_\_\_\_\_
5. **Challenge question:** When going out to eat seafood, you might see soft-shelled crabs listed in the menu. These are actually blue crabs, not a different kind of crab. These crabs would just have gone through what part of their life cycle? Use facts from the article to explain your answer.