

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.