

Spiders from the  
mythological  
character arachne, a



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Spiders My essay is on spiders. I have chosen a few spiders to report about. I also have some basic info about spiders in general. Spiders comprise a large, widespread group of carnivorous arthropods.

They have eight legs, can produce silk, and usually have poison glands associated with fangs. More than 30,000 species of spiders are found on every continent except Antarctica in almost every kind of terrestrial habitat and a few aquatic ones as well. Spiders range in body size from about 0.5 mm (0.

02 in) to 9 cm (3.5 in). The term spider is derived from the Old English *spinnan* ("to spin") referring to the group's use of silk. Spiders make up the order Araneae in the class Arachnida, which takes its name from the mythological character Arachne, a peasant girl who challenged the weaving skill of the goddess Athena. Arachne equaled Athena's skill in a contest, and in response to Athena's anger she hanged herself.

In belated remorse Athena changed the body of Arachne into a spider and allowed her to retain her weaving skill. My first selection is the brown recluse spider. The brown recluse spider (*Loxosceles reclusa*) is a poisonous spider in the United States. It is mostly found from Kansas and Missouri, south to Texas, and west to California. Found in sheltered places indoors and outdoors it is about 10 mm (.4 in.) long and has an orange-yellow body with a dark violin-shaped design on its back. Its bite isn't usually fatal to humans, the venom destroys the skin and it may take a few months to heal. The brown recluse is mostly active at night. It feeds on small insects that it paralyzes with its poison. The Black

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WidowThe black widow, *Latrodectus mactans*, is a poisonous spider of the family Theridiidae, order Araneida.

The female, about 1.3 cm (0.5 in) long, is glossy black, densely clothed with microscopic hairs, and has a red hourglass mark on the underside of the abdomen. The male, which is rarely seen, is smaller than the female and has four pairs of red marks along the sides of the abdomen.

The black widow is found worldwide in the warmer regions in every state in the United States except Alaska and Hawaii; it lives in a variety of natural and domestic habitats. Generally, the females are not aggressive unless agitated, although they are prone to bite when guarding an egg sac. The venomous bite of the black widow spider, *Latrodectus mactans*, causes muscle spasms and breathing difficulty in humans and may be fatal. The female is distinguished by a red hourglass marking on its underside. The black widow eats a diet of insects, spiders and centipedes captured in its web.

After mating, the female may ensnare and feed upon her mate—hence the name black widow. Its venomous bite causes muscle spasms and difficulty in breathing. Tarantulas In common American usage, tarantulas are the large, hairy long-lived spiders that make up the family Theraphosidae. Related forms such as funnel-web spiders and trap door spiders are also often called tarantulas. The name came from a smaller wolf spider of Europe but was then applied by explorers of the New World to the giant spiders that they encountered. No North American species has a venom that is dangerous to humans, but tarantula body hairs may induce an allergic reaction.

Tarantulas can give you a painful bite. Tarantulas occur in warmer regions, where they feed on both invertebrates and small vertebrates. Many grow to about 2.5 to 7.5 cm (1 to 3 in) long, with a 13-cm species (5-in) legspan, and some South American bird-catching species are larger. Some tarantulas reach an age of 20 years.