Mimicry

Mimicry is the capacity that many animals have of modifying their appearance and adapting it to the environment in which they live.

An animal which is a good mimic has a better chance of escaping its predators (men or animals). So it lives longer. And on the other hand its ability to disguise itself gives it a better chance of attacking its victim without being seen.

A chameleon's skin "photographs" its surrounding and then perfectly copies its patterns, tones and colours. The hare and the weasel are also mimics in a way, because in the winter their fur becomes white like the snow. Tigers, leopards, giraffes and other animals which have coats with spots or stripes are having protective colouring. Their coats copy the mosaic of light and shadow that the sun creates among the leaves of the jungle or the grass of the savannah. We call this camouflage. The same goes for the bears, the foxes and he arctic wolves whose coats are as white as the polar ice packs.

The champions of mimicry are many of our lovely butterflies. One looks just like a rotting piece of wood; another whose wing patterns perfectly imitate the pine twigs on which it lives, and yet another which, when resting, lays its wings out in such a way that it looks like an oak leaf.

Some butterflies have a more active defence system. When threatened, they open their wings and show off brightly coloured spots, like big eyes, which confuse the predator, and frighten it away.

appearance: look, form
camouflage: disguise, cover-up
capacity: measurement
coat: covering
environment: nature, surroundings
frighten: scare
fur: hair
hare: looks like a rabbit
leaves: foliage
oak: a tree
pattern: design, decoration
pine: a conifer tree
predator: hunter animal
protective: caring, shielding
rotting: bad, decaying
shadow: shade, dimness
spot: stain, dot
stripe: band of colour
surrounding: context, situation
to adapt: modify
to confuse: puzzle, perplex
to create: make, generate
to disguise: hide
to escape: run away
to look like: be similar
to modify: change
to show off: boast
to threaten: warn, menace
twig: branch, stick
victim: prey, target

Note: A wolf - two wolves; one leaf - many leaves; a butterfly - some butterflies; a fox - three foxes.

TRUE or FALSE?

Lions and tigers are predators	*TRUE*	An oak is a tree.	
Mimicry is just good for defending, never for attacking.		"Camouflage" means to look aggressive and threatening.	
Butterflies are dangerous animals.		A chameleon can change its colour.	
Sometimes animals are frightened of butterflies.		An Arctic wolf looks like an oak leaf.	
The hare's fur becomes green in spring.		A tiger's fur shows a pattern.	
Camouflage helps an animal to live longer.		Spots and stripes on the fur imitate light and shadow.	