

Thematic Unit

Abstract

This unit is intended to educate students about different animal terms, definitions, classifications, characteristics, adaptations, and the ways in which animals help humans directly and indirectly. An emphasis can be made on marine animals for a Marine Biology class. These areas will be explored through the integration of language arts, science, math, social studies, and visual arts. The lessons in this thematic unit will be addressed by the California state standards, objectives, materials and procedures appropriate for the 9th grade with modifications/alternate curriculum for 4th grade academic skill level. This Unit is also written specifically with Mild/Moderate Special Ed students in mind, as I teach Special Education (various subjects – Math, Science, Language Arts, History).

One Month of Thematic Unit Lessons

Lesson 1 (week 1): 26 terms and definitions necessary for the proper understanding of animals, including marine animals of course. Students write the terms in their notebooks and then develop an understanding of the terms through related activities.

Objective: Students will build their vocabulary and learn how to apply the terms and will be able to give examples of each.

Standards: Word analysis, fluency and systematic vocabulary development – 1.1, 1.3, 1.6
Reading comprehension – 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 3.3

Activities: Choose five of the following:

- 1) Word Searches
- 2) Animal Crackers
- 3) Habitat Game
- 4) Camouflage Writing
- 5) Predator and Prey Game
- 6) Scavengers Are Us
- 7) Crossword Puzzle
- 8) Lion King Checklist

Lesson 2 (week 2): In this classification section, students learn the important characteristics of the major vertebrate families (groups) – fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals.

Objective: Students will learn scientific classification of animals and will be able to distinguish between the different animal groups.

Standards: Life Science – 2b, 3b, 3c, 3d, Language Arts – 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7

Activities: Choose five of the following:

- 1) Fish – Where did the fish go? (Graphing activity)
- 2) Amphibians – the life cycle of a frog (coloring or sketching activity)
- 3) Reptiles – video review (Them Be Dragons)
- 4) Birds – birds by number (coloring activity)
- 5) Mammals – video review (Lorne Green’s New Wilderness)
- 6) Animal – What am I? (20 questions game)
- 7) Mystery Animals (enrichment activity)

Lesson 3 (week 3): In this section, animal adaptations are discussed and investigated. Ways that animals have adapted to suit their environments and survival strategies that animals have developed are discussed.

Objective: For students to learn how some animals adapt to their environment, and for students to learn to recognize and locate the various geographic regions related to the animals being studied.

Standards: Life Science 2b, 3b, 3c, 3d, Number Sense – 1.1, 1.5, 1.7, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, Mathematical Reasoning – 1.2, 2.3, 3.3, History-Social Science – 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.4, 4.1.5

Activities: One activity per day. More may be added to have more to choose from.

- 1) Adapt an animal
- 2) Dinosaur adaptations in Jurassic Park
- 3) Animals review
- 4) Climate and nature
- 5) Geographic regions and cohabitation

Lesson 4 (week 4): In this section, students learn about the various ways in which some animals help humans either directly or indirectly. Students will choose an animal that helps humans and will write lists of words that describe their choice. More advanced students will write a report on one of these animals.

Objective: For students to learn the various fields in which animals contribute to mankind such as rescue, research, medicine, military, oceanography, protection, handicap, entertainment, with a focus on identifying and describing how various cultures define and value art differently.

Standards: Writing Application – 2.3a, 2.3b, 2.3c, 2.4, Writing and Oral English Language Conventions – 1.0, 1.1, 1.6, 1.7, Listening and Speaking – 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, Artistic Perception – 1.3, Creative Expression – 2.7, Aesthetic Valuing – 4.4

Activities: Assign appropriate activity depending on the ability level of each student;

- 1) Student will write list of descriptive words

- 2) Student will write report on helpful animal
- 3) Student will write a list of films and programs that portray animal heroes
- 4) Animal legends
- 5) Animals portrayed in world history

Strategies:

- 1) Teacher uses only a few terms per day, depending on the activity chosen for that day.
- 2) Teacher has notes written on the board ahead of time or uses an overhead projector in order to be able to face the students during the lesson and in order to maximize time needed to help students.
- 3) After the terms have been copied down and explained, the teacher selects a related activity which will help students better understand the terms.
- 4) Visual aides of the terms and concepts being taught should be used, such as a picture of an animal using color for camouflage, for example.
- 5) Use charts to help students visualize various parts of the lessons, such as animal adaptations. Teacher can use a chart to go over each animal and describe how each animal uses its characteristics to its advantage, such as the giraffe and its long neck.
- 6) Create a bulletin board for this thematic unit with each week's subtitle and with areas for each student's choice of animal.
- 7) Give students opportunities to discuss their thoughts about the animals being studied. Perhaps a brief group activity can be integrated once a week.
- 8) Invite a guest speaker such as an animal trainer to speak to the students.
- 9) Conduct a field trip to the aquarium or the zoo and obtain permission for a behind the scenes tour, visiting the animal rehab/animal care section of the aquarium or zoo.

Thematic Unit Expanded for Ten Months

October: Lesson one will be expanded and many more marine animals within each category will be added to the vocabulary list.

November: Lesson two will be expanded and a more in-depth look at the differences in marine animals will be presented.

December: Lesson three will be expanded and more marine animal adaptations will be looked at, using animals from all the continents.

January: How different countries view animals and what marine animals are used for in different countries. Pets? Religion? Food source? National Symbol? Etc.

February: Lesson four will be expanded, and natural vs learned animal assistance to humans will be studied, with a focus on the historical importance of animals throughout the world. The emphasis will be on marine animals.

March: Students will be taught how to do research for writing a level-appropriate book report.

April: Various marine animal videos, documentaries, and shows will be viewed by the class.

May: The class will focus on reviewing key terms and concepts from the previous 8 months and will learn how to brainstorm individually and in groups, with the goal of choosing a related marine science fair project.

June: The class will work collaboratively on a marine science project. The class will be divided into small groups. Each small group will be responsible for a portion of the marine animal science project and will learn about the scientific method.