

The Animals Around Us

All animal species are unique. There's something special about each, from what it eats to where it lives to how it communicates with others of its kind. Whether you have a dog as a pet or you wake up to the chirping of birds, chances are that you cross paths with the animal world each and every day.

Essential Questions

1. How do animals live and grow in their environment?
2. Do writers of fictional texts include details that are true to life about their animal characters?
3. What fictional or human qualities do writers include?
4. What is unique about each type of animal?
5. How are animals similar to and different from humans?

Introduction to the Theme

Ask students to picture their favorite animal. Then have them turn and describe the animal to a partner without naming it. Have partners try to identify the animal being described.

Bring the class back together and have students raise a hand if they guessed the animal their partner described. Ask students who guessed correctly what details their partner used to describe the animal.

Informational Text

These *TIME for Kids* articles can be used to discuss the theme of the animals around us.

1. [“Into the Wild”](#) (May 3, 2019) Elephants are the largest animals on land.
2. [“What Do You Say?”](#) (September 7, 2018) Animals communicate in different ways.
3. [“A Frog’s Life”](#) (March 23, 2018) Learn about how a frog grows.
4. [“Busy Bees”](#) (January 5, 2018) Bees live and work together in a hive.
5. [“Cool Cats”](#) (January 13, 2017) Find out about different types of wild cats.
6. [“All About Owls”](#) (September 23, 2016) There are about 200 different kinds of owls in the world.

Literary Text

These fictional texts can be used to discuss the theme of the animals around us.

1. [I Don’t Want to Be a Frog](#), by Dev Petty. A young frog wishes he were a different animal.
2. [Mr. Tiger Goes Wild](#), by Peter Brown. Mr Tiger is tired of being so proper all the time.
3. [The Very Greedy Bee](#), by Steve Smallman. A greedy bee learns why it’s better to share.
4. [Little Owl’s Night](#), by Divya Srinivasan. Little Owl wakes at night and sees other nighttime creatures.

Optional Extension

As a class, make a list of things that students have learned about the animals in the texts they’ve read (where they live, what they eat, etc.). Then have them choose an animal they haven’t read about. This can be the animal they thought of at the beginning of the unit or an animal they want to know more about. Have students spend time researching this animal and supply some of the details they’ve learned about other animals. After they’ve done some research, ask students to draw a picture of their animal with labels about what makes it unique. The picture should illustrate some facts about the animal.

Next, have students write a fictional story using their animal as the main character. Similar to the fictional texts they’ve read, their stories should include some factual information about the animal, even if the animal character behaves like a human.

Editor in Chief: Andrea Delbanco

Creative Director: Drew Willis

Curriculum Director: Stacy Bien

Associate Editor: Candace Dipsey

Contributing Writer: Rebecca Mordechai

Copy Editors: Mike DeCapite, Jordan Mamone