

Now You See Me, Now You Don't

THEME

Some animals use their looks to help them avoid becoming a predator's dinner.

SUB THEMES

1. Camouflage is an adaptation that helps animals to survive.
2. Animals can use camouflage to become invisible.
3. Some animals like to copy other animals for protection.

VOCABULARY

Camouflage, mimicry, adaptation, interrelationships, environment, habitat, ecosystem, hypothesis

ACTIVITY MATERIALS

Pictures of animals using camouflage and mimicry, tri-colored pasta (dry), paper cups, scissors, glue, tape, craft materials (construction paper, markers, crayons, etc.)

INTRODUCTION

Introduce yourself and state the title of the activity. Preview the main points of the activity and give students an idea of what they will be doing. Conversationally state the theme and sub themes. Ask: **What is camouflage** (it is an adaptation that helps an animal survive by using color or patterns to blend in with the environment)? Ask: **Can you think of any animals that use camouflage** (e.g. chameleon, frogs and toads, rabbits, etc.)? Explain that some animals also use their color or patterns to look like another animal or something non-edible. This is called mimicry.

Hold up several pictures of animals using camouflage or mimicry. Have the students guess where the hidden animal is located. Also, encourage them to guess who the animals using mimicry are trying to imitate (answers on reverse of pictures).

ACTIVITY

Explain that the students are going to play a game to see how camouflage really works. They are going to pretend that they are predators in search of food. Tell them that they are very hungry and need to find as much food as possible to survive. Hold up the tri-color pasta and explain that each piece of pasta represents one 'animal' for the predator to eat. Tell the students that they are going to have to 'hunt' for their food in the grass. Ask: **Which animal do you think will most likely be eaten? Least likely?** Pass out one paper cup to each student. Explain that they will have a few minutes to collect as many 'animals' as they can in the cups (they are not

Teacher's Corner

Grade Level(s)

3rd, 4th, and 5th grades

State Performance Indicators

SPI 0307

-2.2: Determine how plants and animals compete for resources such as food, space, water, air, and shelter.

-5.1: Investigate an organism's characteristics and evaluate how these particular features enable it to survive in a particular environment.

SPI 0407

-5.1: Determine how a physical or behavioral adaptation can enhance the chances of survival.

SPI 0507

-5.1: Identify physical and behavioral adaptations that enable animals such as amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, and mammals to survive in a particular environment.

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ACTIVITY (cont.)

Allowed to eat the pasta). Toss the pasta into the grass and let the students race to collect as much as possible.

Gather the group back together after a few minutes of collection. Have the students count how many of each color they collected. Ask: **Which color did you collect the most? The least? Why is that?** Explain that the green pasta blended in with the green grass. This is the benefit of camouflaging coloration. Because they blend with their environment, animals are able to remain hidden from predators. Collect the pasta and cups.

Bring the students under the tent where the craft portion will take place. Explain that they are going to make their very own imaginary animal that uses camouflage to blend in with its environment. They can use green colors to blend in with plants, brown colors to blend in with dirt, etc. Encourage them to use their creativity to make something really unique. Allow students 15 minutes to create their animal.

Once the animals are complete, take the students on a nature walk to 'hide' their animal where its camouflage will help it blend in with its environment (along the cave trail). Encourage the other students to try to find each other's animal. .

Bring the group back together for the discussion.

DISCUSSION

If there is time, point out different animals along the trail that use camouflage such as crickets, lizards, etc. Discuss how each animal is using camouflage. Explain that camouflage and mimicry are adaptations that help animals survive. Ask: **How do you think predators have adapted to be able to find animals that blend with their environment** (good vision, sense of smell, stalking, etc.)?

WRAP-UP

Let the group know that the activity is coming to an end. Conversationally review the theme and subthemes. Give the teachers any of the materials that students are able to take home with them.

BRINGING IT TO THE CLASSROOM

Visit our website to watch a short video about the importance of camouflage for animals and then engage in an interactive game to predict what bugs will survive being eaten by a group of hungry robins (<http://www.butternutvalleynaturecenter.com/ComputerActivities.htm>).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Copyright © 2009 Healing Stones Foundation. All rights reserved.
- Activity developed by Melissa Squirlock; February 2009.
- Reference material, vocabulary, and definitions from: Science: Grade 4. (2003). Unit A: A World Of Living Things. Harcourt: Orlando, pp. A52.