

Classroom pets---feathered, furred, or scaled---can provide teachers with unbeatable opportunities for a range of differentiated learning activities. Our corn snake has been central to building literacy and language skills in our middle school ESL Language Arts classroom. We spend some time quietly observing our snake as he feeds and then use our observations to learn about the features of different kinds of writing and to build vocabulary. With a few tweaks, these activities will work well with students of all ages observing any kind of classroom pet.

Lesson Plan: Snake Eats Mouse

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Snake eats mouse

By Francisco Chan
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When the snake came out of the rock it started to smell and looked around. When the snake saw the dead mouse it grabbed the mouse and slowly eat the mouse .But when the snake finished it wend under the rock.



Caution! *It is important that students are given guidelines for behavior when working around any live animal in the classroom. Prior to beginning this lesson, the teacher and students review the Snake Rules for our class: 1. No screaming. 2. No jumping. 3. Treat the snake with respect. As we go over these rules, the teacher clarifies with examples and makes sure all students are comfortable with observing the snake as it feeds. The teacher reminds the students that the snake is a nocturnal animal. The lights will be dimmed during this activity and students are asked to remain very quiet as they observe.*

Objectives: CC W2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. a. Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/ effect; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., charts, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. b. Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. c. Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts. d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

Materials: mug, warm water, food item (mouse) encased in small plastic bag, tongs, anchor chart with labeled pictures of these items

Set Up: Tell students that they will be observing as the snake eats and writing about it afterwards. Place the bagged food item (chilled mouse) into the mug of warm water. Allow students to guess why the food item should be warmed slightly. (*The snake will be attracted to the warmth of the prey as it would be in the wild.*) Ask students to guess why feeding a captive snake live prey is not a good idea. (*The live prey may injure the snake.*) Review expectations for behavior while the snake is feeding. (Students should avoid quick movements and loud sounds.)

Observation: Lower the lights. Remind students to observe quietly and watch closely. Place the snake tank in a location where it is visible to all students. Using the tongs, remove the warmed food item and place it in a shallow dish in the snake's tank. Because corn snakes are generally less active during daylight, the snake will generally be hidden at first. As it becomes aware of the food item, it will investigate using its tongue to smell. Consuming a mouse is not a quick business. You may want to provide whispered comments guiding students to analyze the snake's behavior. For example, the corn snake will commonly wrap itself around the food item prior to consuming it. The food item will be rotated until the snake is eating it head-first. The snake may push against a hard surface as it is swallowing the food. It may "yawn" once the food has moved entirely into the snake to reposition its jaws. And, frequently, the snake will take a drink of water after it eats. The entire process is likely to take a little more than 10 minutes.

A Few Extension Activities:

Students use the vocabulary they gain while observing and feeding the snake again and again in other lessons.

Snakes are often in the news.

Let's look for the parts of this article.

August 3, 2008

World's smallest snake discovered

Barbados— A new species of snake, as slim as a spaghetti noodle, was found hiding out in a forest on Barbados earlier this year. The reptilian zuzz is now the world's smallest snake.

Blair Hedges, a biologist, discovered the snake, which just under four inches in length as an adult.

Hedges analyzed genetic material from the snake, which proved that the snake was a new species.

"Snakes may be prevented by natural selection from becoming too small, because, before a serious meal, there may be searching for their prey to eat," Hedges said.

The Barbados snake feeds primarily on the larvae of ants and termites.

Let's read about this little snake.

This photo went with a story published last week.

What do you think happened?

We use our interest in the corn snake to build English proficiency, reading skills, and key science and math vocabulary. Supported by a few pictures, this reading becomes accessible to students with very limited English who have watched the snake eat.

What is a reptile?

A reptile is a kind of animal. There are four groups of reptiles: turtles, snakes, lizards and crocodiles/alligators. All reptiles have backbones and scales. They are cold-blooded animals. Reptiles are hatched from eggs. They breathe air. Baby reptiles look like small adults.

Name _____

Date _____

Reptiles

Reptile Statistics 2

Part I: Reading On Monday, students looked in reptile books for interesting reptile statistics. Statistics are numbers that tell about something. Let's read some of the reptile statistics we found.

1. Snakes, crocodiles, and lizards have been on earth for 400 million years.
2. The fangs of the gaboon viper can be as long as 2 inches.
3. The jumping viper can jump almost 3 feet off the ground.
4. The King Cobra's head is as big as a man's hand and its body can reach about 18 feet in length.
5. The spitting cobra can hit a target more than six feet away.
6. Gamek, a crocodile that died at an alligator farm in Florida in 1997, was around 70 to 90 years old.
7. The Nile crocodile can live to be around 70 years old and some may live to be 100 years old.
8. There are over 3,000 different kinds of lizards.

This is another selection from a reading assignment. After watching the snake eat, students become very interested in exploring the reptile books in our classroom library. After locating a number of interesting reptile statistics, students read them together and master some key English related to numbers and units. These are skills they will need in all classes.

Simple assignments can be effective. We have many students with limited formal education. They practice writing sentences while peering into Viewmasters. (Yes, Viewmasters are still around!)

Name _____

Date _____

Reptiles

Reptile Viewmaster

Directions: There are two Viewmasters. One is red and the other is blue. The two Viewmasters have the same pictures. You will work together with a partner.

Part I: Writing Sentences

There are seven different pictures. Begin with the green iguana. For each picture, write two sentences about the animal. One sentence must have a number.

- 1.
- 2.

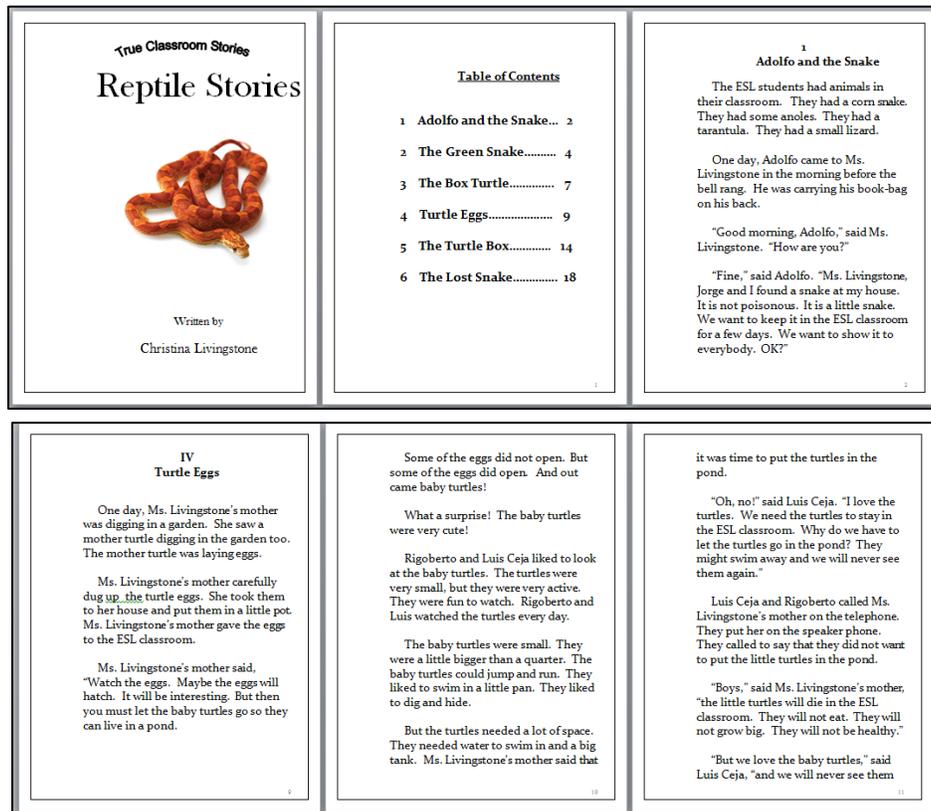


Have you ever?

1. Have you ever seen a live snake near your house? When?
2. Have you ever seen a dead snake on the road? Where?
3. Have you ever looked at living snakes in a museum or zoo? When?
4. Have you ever seen someone hold a live snake? When?
5. Have you ever touched something made out of snakeskin, such as boots or a belt?
6. Have you ever seen the skull or bones of a snake? Where?
7. Have you ever watched a snake eat something? What?
8. Have you ever killed a snake? What kind? Where? Why?
9. Have you ever picked up or held a snake? When? What kind?
10. Have you ever had a pet snake? What kind?

People have a lot of emotional reactions to snakes. We spend some time exploring our experiences with snakes as we practice listening and speaking.

Finally, we read and write little books about shared experiences. *Reptile Stories*, believe it or not, contains six little reptile stories from our classroom, all of them true. Even students who were not around to experience these particular dramas eventually begin to “remember” them!



One of the most rewarding outcomes of a classroom reptile is watching students overcome their initial fears through knowing and appreciating one particular pet. It changes the way students perceive reptiles everywhere.