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INTRODUCTION

The Theme: A Plan for Teaching and Learning at the Primary Level

A thematic approach to learning allows a teacher to accommodate different ability levels, interest areas, and learning styles in the primary grades. A wide range of materials and resources can be used to provide content for concept formation and vocabulary development. Learning processes and skills mastery are integrated with content. A theme provides an overall long-range plan that interrelates subjects and provides for practice in many areas of skills development.

The Animal Kingdom is a theme that suggests ways a teacher can plan structured learning experiences for an integrated curriculum on various ability levels. The major content focus is drawn from the life sciences: biology, ecology, and environmental studies. Activities are fused with the language arts and furnish extended opportunities to develop understandings and to broaden concepts. This theme presents information about the animals that fascinates young children. This in turn encourages inquisitive young minds to explore and investigate the secrets of nature and the animal kingdom. The material presented in this book enables a teacher to capitalize on the enthusiasm by providing creative ideas for learning activities that put science concepts to work while sharpening skills. The suggested learning experiences enable students to follow through on activities independently with a partner or in a small group. Children learn how to attack problems with confidence and ease, to take pleasure in skills mastery and in doing well. They come to understand and appreciate the beauty and bounty of nature.

Modular Organization

The theme is divided into learning modules, which are relatively self-contained units. They can be taught separately or in a sequence.

The Animal Kingdom consists of ten independent but related modules, one for each month of the school year. A modular approach that is not interdependent is not only practical to organize but has several other advantages:

- Children can succeed in each module regardless of prior experience (moving into class later in the year or being sick does not penalize a child).
- Each module allows children to learn, practise, and expand skills on different levels of proficiency.
- The relatively few modules covered allow for a more in-depth approach that encourages investigation of topics.
- These investigations allow children to use thinking processes, research, and study skills in order to develop science concepts and become independent learners.

Each module introduces a different animal and explores its adaptations to the environment. There is a passage about the animal to read aloud to the children. The questions that follow the selections are posed to motivate the children to learn more about the animals and their habitats. The children are encouraged to recall, summarize, and explain what they have learned.

A Modular Planning Sheet is included for each modular unit. This format allows for flexibility in planning which skills are to be taught and which materials and resources are to be used. The Modular Planning Sheet aids a teacher in designing learning experiences to involve children in applying concepts and discovering more about natural phenomena. The Modular Planning Sheet covers the following areas:

- Module (animal to be studied)
- Concepts
- Vocabulary
- Questions
- Knowledge and Skills Objectives
- Activities
- Interrelated Subjects
- Materials and Resources
- Values and Attitudes
- Evaluation

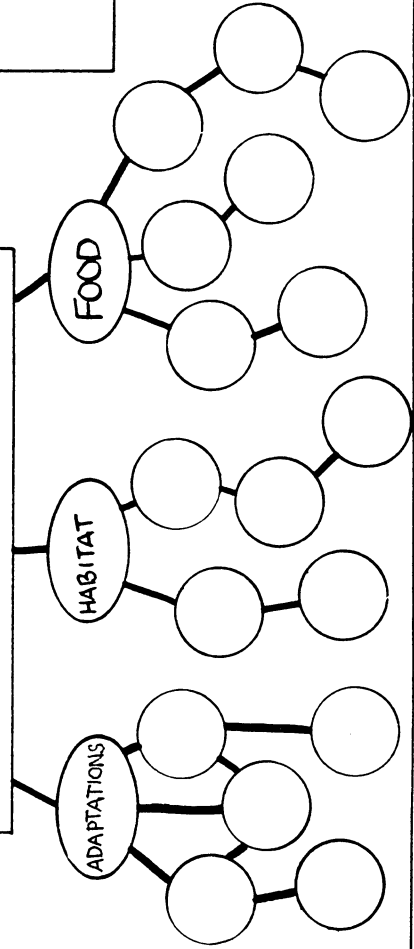
This book contains much material that the teacher can use in planning modular lessons. Science concepts are stated and examples provided. Questions, books, materials, and other resources are suggested. These may be supplemented with additional questions, resources, and activities of the teacher's own choosing to extend learning. Activities and worksheets by which the children can apply the concepts they have developed are included. The books suggested contain beautiful photographs, charts, and illustrations. These selections not only sharpen children's powers of observation but also develop aesthetic appreciation.

THE ANIMAL KINGDOM LEARNING CENTRE

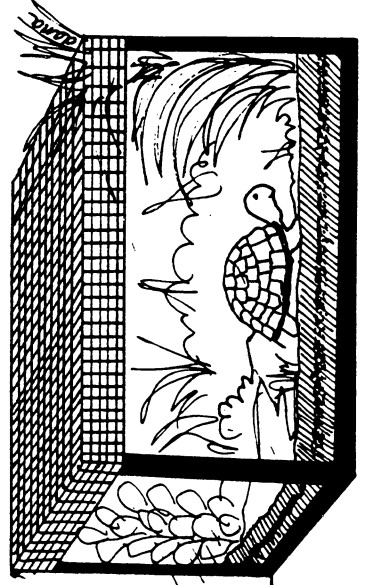


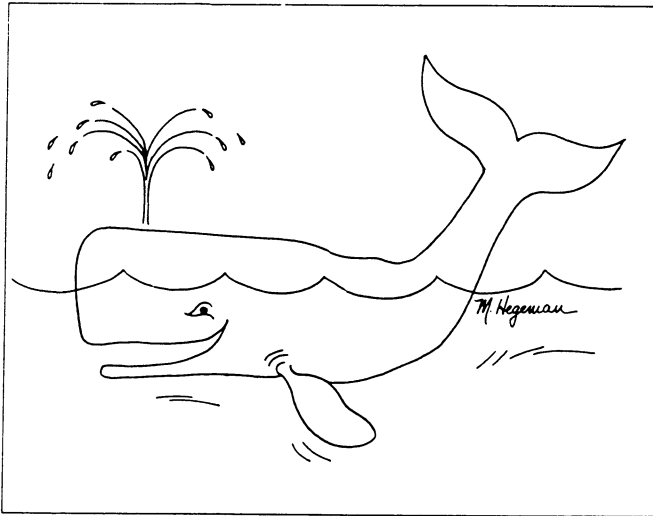
is the animal of the month
for the month of

picture of
the animal



ACTIVITIES





ANIMAL RECORD SHEET

Animal's name: Whale

Record of important facts:

Draw the animal.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Special Words: _____

Animal's habitat: _____

Now label the animal's parts.

THE ANIMAL KINGDOM PLANNING SHEET

animal of the month

Whale

month

My Activities Plan

Some things I want to know about are:

FOOD

HABITAT

ADAPTATIONS

Draw a picture of the animal.

A HABITAT

The _____ habitat is home to the whale.

Draw plants and things found in this habitat. Draw the animal too.

Can you include some other animals that might live here?

Animal Facts: Whale

Passage to Read Aloud

If you wanted to find the biggest animal in the world, where would you look? You would look in the ocean. The blue whale is larger than any other animal and lives in the ocean. Who has seen a whale? It is hard to imagine just how big a blue whale is without ever seeing one. It is about 30 metres long, which is longer than three trucks lined up in a row. The blue whale can weigh as much as 150 tonnes or more than twenty elephants.

These huge animals never leave the water. Whales are well adapted to their life in the ocean. They have a fish-like form. They have front flippers and a flat tail to propel them through the water. Yet they are not fish. Whales are warm-blooded creatures. They are mammals. Mother whales have live babies and feed them milk.

Whales have a layer of thick fat under their skin called blubber. This helps them keep warm in the cold polar oceans. They breathe air like people. Most whales travel close to the surface and come up every fifteen minutes or so to breathe. Fish have gills for breathing. Whales have lungs. They breathe through blow holes on top of their heads. The whale's spout is a stream of air and water being squirted out the hole on top of its huge head. There are different kinds and sizes of whales. Some whales have teeth and are called toothed whales (odontocetes). Sperm whales, killer whales, and porpoises belong to this group. Whales that don't have teeth are called baleen whales (mystecetes). The blue whale is a baleen whale, so it doesn't have teeth. It does have a strainer of whale bone that hangs down inside its mouth. This traps small fish and plants called plankton. It also keeps out larger fish which would get caught in its small throat. Some other baleen whales are humpbacks, grays, and fintails.

The whale has small eyes but good vision. Its eyes are well suited to a life in the ocean. A whale's ears are no more than tiny holes in the side of its head, but a whale's hearing is very good. Whales make gnashing noises with their teeth. Then they listen with their keen ears for the echoes to bounce back from things in their path (sonar). This is very helpful to toothed whales who hunt squid deep in the ocean where it is very dark.

Whales live and travel in family groups. When winter comes to the Arctic and Antarctic Oceans, the whales travel many thousands of kilometres to a place where the ocean is warm. As they cruise along they make great dives and leaps and play in the water. They communicate and warn each other of danger. Their whistles, groans, squeaks, and other shrill sounds can be heard a long way off.

The whales have their babies in these warm waters. The father whales are called bulls. The mother is called a cow. She has a calf every other year. She is pregnant for ten or twelve months. Baby whale calves are born tail first so they will not drown. The cow quickly pushes her baby to the surface so it can breathe. Her little calf cannot suck so the cow squirts milk into her baby's mouth. Soon the babies grow larger. The whales start on their long trip back to the cold polar oceans where food is plentiful.

People have hunted and killed too many whales. Today there aren't many whales left. We must be careful or someday they will be extinct. There will be no whales on earth.

QUESTIONS:

Can you describe a whale?

How do you know a whale is a mammal?

How does a whale's keen hearing help it survive?

If you were a baby whale what would your life be like?

Which of a whale's adaptations to life in the ocean do you think is most important for its survival?