

If I Were a Fish Activity

Teacher Page

Activity Description

What would life be like as a fish? Students make a fish by tracing their hands or feet. They then describe their life as a “fish,” providing information about their habitat and identifying fish body parts and behaviors that may improve their chance for survival.



Key Concepts

- Fish have adaptations for survival, such as physical structures (body parts), camouflage and behaviors, that help them avoid predators and find prey.
- There are similarities and differences between humans and fish, such as stomachs and intestines for digestion and lungs or gills for breathing.
- Fish, like humans, need food, shelter and oxygen to survive and reproduce.

California Science Standards

Grade 3: 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 5c

Grade 4: 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 6b, 6e

Grade 5: 2b, 2c, 6a, 6g

(<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fd/documents/sci-std.pdf>)

California Language Arts Standards

Reading

Writing

Written and Oral English Language

Conventions

Listening and Speaking

(<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/fd/documents/elcontentstnds.pdf>)

Materials

- Hands or feet
- Paper: drawing, writing
- Pencils, crayons or paint
- Black marker pen
- Fish pictures
- Nonfiction resource materials (books, magazines, web sites)
- Science journals
- *Fish Wish* book by Bob Barner
- [Mystery Fish Group Exploration Guide*](#) (optional)

* These materials are available on the aquarium’s web site on the Activity Link listed to the right.

Activity Link

This activity is part of an Ocean Explorers Teaching Unit “Mystery Fish.”

http://www.mbayaq.org/lc/teachers_place/activity_fish_mystery.asp

You’ll find other related activities, background information about fish and their physical characteristics and more online resources students can use to research fish and their habitats.

Directions

1. Look at pictures of fish or use observations from a visit to an aquarium. Discuss fish body parts (eyes, mouth, fins, gills, stomach) and behaviors (swimming, hiding, holding still). How might these body parts and behaviors help fish survive in their habitats? What colors are the fish? How does camouflage help fish survive?

2. Have each student trace the outline of one of his/her hands or feet on a piece of paper or have them work with a partner to trace each other's hands or feet. Draw over the outline with a black marker.
3. Have each student color his/her paper handprint or footprint to look like a fish. In which habitats can their fish camouflage? What body parts does a fish have? Draw an eye and a mouth on the palm part of the handprint or the heel part of the footprint. Draw a fin on the middle of the fish and scales on the "body" of the fish. Add lines on the tail (where the fingers or toes are located). Students can add top and bottom fins to their fish bodies.
4. Read the book *Fish Wish* by Bob Barner. Then discuss how life would be different if the students were fish. Would they be able to walk? Sing? How would they swim? How would they use their fish body parts to survive? In what habitats would they live? What would they eat? What difficulties might they experience?
5. Have the students write about their life as a fish, using nonfiction resources to gather additional information based on State Science Content Standards. Students may use the *Mystery Fish* Group Exploration Guide for examples of information to gather. The students then share their stories with the class.

Activity Resources

Monterey Bay Aquarium Web Site

Live Web Cams

Students can watch and observe sharks and many different kind of fish on our live Kelp Forest and Outer Bay web cams.

http://www.mbayaq.org/efc/cam_menu.asp

Animal Fact Cards

Printable animal fact cards including fish in several different habitats.

http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/lc/activities/critter_cards.asp

Online Field Guide

Online field guide of marine animals with photos, diet, range, habitat and conservation notes.

http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/efc/living_species/default.asp

Fish Videos

Short clips to watch online from our Video Library.

http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/efc/video_library/video_library.aspx

Sea Searcher's Handbook

The "Fishes" chapter includes background information about how fish are adapted for specific habitats.

http://www.mbayaq.org/lc/teachers_place/resources_seasearchers.asp

External Link

FishBase is a global information system on fish. The web site has information about 28,500 fish, including common and scientific names and photos. Take a Fish Quiz!

www.fishbase.org

Recommended Books

Doubilet, David. *Fish Face*.

Ling, Mary. *Amazing Fish - Eyewitness Juniors*

Resnick, Jane P. *Eyes on Nature: Fish*

Extensions

- Draw a picture of a fish food chain.
- Create a mobile using the students' fish prints. Add items that the fish would need to survive in their habitats.
- Look at portraits in David Doubilet's book *Fish Face*. Choose a fish portrait from the book and create your version of it (watercolors, colored pencils, pastels). Create a frame for the portrait and hang it in a "Fish Gallery." Write a story about this fish.
- Illustrate a fish's digestive system. How is it similar or different to a human's digestive system?
- Graph the students' fish pictures by color, length or habitat.