

Myth-try Cards

Topics

Myths, Adaptations

Grades

3-5

Sites

Indoors, Outdoors,
Aquarium

Duration

30 minutes

Materials

- Myth-try Card Template
- Loose-leaf rings
- Creation myth books
- Nonfiction resources (books, magazines, photographs)
- Writing supplies

Vocabulary

adaptations, myth

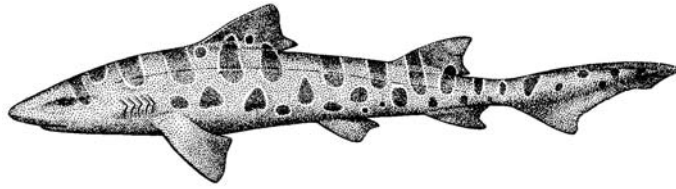
National Science Education Standards

Science as inquiry (K-4), (5-8)

Abilities necessary to do scientific inquiry

Life Science (K-4)
Characteristics of organisms

Life Science (5-8)
Diversity and adaptations of organisms



Overview

How did the leopard shark get its spots? Why does a seahorse have a tail like a monkey? Students read creation myths to learn about various cultural explanations for natural phenomena. They then select ocean animals and write myths to explain their physical structures, behaviors or roles in ecosystems. Finally, students research the animals to provide possible scientific explanations.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Observe an animal carefully, conduct research and record their observations.
- Create a myth about an animal using observations and research.
- Distinguish between myth and scientific facts.

Background

World cultures tell stories to explain natural phenomena, pass on cultural values and share ancestral history. Often these stories become part of a culture's oral tradition, especially because at first the majority did not have a written system of communication.

Many of the stories tell about natural phenomena, such as the origin of the ocean and sea animals. In these creation **myths**, people relate narrative stories thought to be historical. The stories often show the relationship between people and their environment and usually contain a moral lesson. Myths are a kind of folk tale. Other folk tales include legends, which are similar to myths but set in a more recent time with human characters. A fable is also a type of folk tale generally agreed to be fictitious and that teaches moral lessons. Fairy tales are folk tales thought to be fictitious as well. A fairy tale generally includes magic or enchantment and features young people who overcome troubles through personal qualities, such as courage, patience or perseverance.

Some myths contain elements that correspond to real observations of animals and nature. All animals have **adaptations** (physical structures and behaviors) that help them survive in specific ecosystems. The myths sometimes focus on one adaptation, such as size, speed, sharp teeth, or other specialized body parts and behaviors.



VOCABULARY

Myth: a traditional story that explains a natural phenomenon or belief

Adaptations: physical structures and behaviors that help a plant or animal survive in its habitat



ELL TIPS

Myths are a perfect opportunity to explore different cultures. Look into stories from your English Language Learners background. Explore the cultural elements of the myths and what is still relevant today.

Teacher Preparation

1. Photocopy the **Myth-try Card Template** for each student. Cut out the cards.
2. Punch a hole in one corner of each card. Place a loose-leaf ring through the holes to create a card set.

Procedure

1. **AS A CLASS, OR IN SMALL GROUPS READ EXAMPLES OF CREATION MYTHS FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES, FOCUSING ON ANIMAL STORIES.**
Read a myth to the class. Then discuss what a myth is and how these stories are part of a culture's oral tradition. (A myth is a story generally considered historical by a culture and which often contains superhuman or animal characters. It may explain natural phenomena or serve as a model for behavior.)
2. **DISCUSS THE SETTINGS, CHARACTERS AND PLOTS.**
Ask students to explain what was created in the myth, how and why it was created and by whom. What is the setting of the myth? What elements seem imaginary and are there any that seem based in real-world observations? Tell students they are going to get a chance to create their own myths.
3. **STUDENTS MAKE ANIMAL OBSERVATIONS.**
If possible, visit a site where students can observe animals in their habitats like the Monterey Bay Aquarium or even your schoolyard habitat. View online Aquarium live web cams or provide a variety of nonfiction resources if you aren't able to observe live animals. Give students time to make observations. What physical features (e.g., body parts and camouflage) or behaviors do they notice? How do they think the animal's habitat influences those adaptations?
4. **EACH STUDENT USES MYTH-TRY CARDS TO GUIDE THEIR OBSERVATIONS.**
Have students choose an animal about which to create a myth. The myth may explain a physical feature, behavior or the animal's role in an ecosystem. Pass out a set of **Myth-try Cards** to each student. (They may tape them in their science notebook.) Students should use the cards to collect data.
5. **STUDENTS WRITE A CREATION MYTH ABOUT THEIR ANIMAL.**
Once students are finished collecting data, give them time to write and illustrate their myths. They can use their completed **Myth-try Cards** to give them ideas. Ask students to share their stories with the class.
6. **STUDENTS COMPARE THEIR MYTHS TO ACTUAL FACTS ABOUT THEIR CHOSEN ANIMAL.**
Students use nonfiction resources to review their **Myth-try Cards** and confirm their observations with research. Have them look for data about physical structures, behaviors, diet and habitat. They write a possible scientific explanation for the item explained in their myths, using their notes and resource materials. You may also have them use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast their myth with the scientific facts about their animal.

Extensions

- Have students make a hand puppet or flannel pieces of the characters from their myth and use them to tell their story.
- Research facts about animals from various myths stories. Make a T-chart of the imaginary versus factual elements to the stories.

Resources

Websites

Monterey Bay Aquarium www.montereybayaquarium.org

View live web cams, discover facts about animals in the Online Field Guide, print Animal Fact Cards or watch short clips about animals from our online video library.

Books

Aesop's Fables. Detlor, Theda. Scholastic Press, 2001.

Anansi the Spider (and also *Arrow to the Sun*, *Raven*, and *Zomo the Rabbit*). McDermott, Gerald. Henry Holt and Co., 1972.

Keepers of the Earth: Native American Stories. Bruchac, Joseph. Fulchrim, Inc., 1989.

Punia and the King of Sharks. Wardlaw, Lee. Dial Books for Young Readers, 1997.

The Shark God. Martin, Rafe. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2002.

Stories of the Flood. Krishnaswami, Uma. Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1994.

Standards

California Science Standards

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

Grade 4: 2a, b, c; 3a, b, c; 6a

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

California Language Arts Standards

Reading

Writing

Written and Oral English Language Conventions

Listening and Speaking

**THE MISSION OF THE
MONTEREY BAY
AQUARIUM
IS TO INSPIRE
CONSERVATION OF THE
OCEANS.**

MYTH-try Cards Template

MYTH-try Cards

Your Name: _____

Date: _____

Animal: _____

Habitat: _____

Habitat

Saltwater: _____ Freshwater: _____

Coral: _____ Sand: _____

Plants/algae: _____ Other: _____

Role of animal in habitat:

Draw a picture of your animal in its habitat:

Behaviors

Swimming fast: _____ Hiding: _____

Swimming slow: _____ Moving fins: _____

Crawling: _____ Eating: _____

Staying still: _____ Holding on: _____

Other behaviors: _____

Physical Features

Body shape: _____

Size: _____

Body parts: _____

Color/

Camouflage: _____