

LESSON: Critter Building**Grade Level:** First Grade**OBJECTIVES:**

Students will:

- Learn about characteristics, differences and similarities among living things (Iowa Core Life Science)
- Report the process of critter building, including details of what happened, event order, and explanation for their decisions and a conclusion. (Literacy)
- Strategize and develop critical thinking and teamwork skills to build their “Critters” (21st Century Skills)

MATERIALS:

Junk box with stuff like--

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rubber bands ▪ Paper towel and toilet paper rolls ▪ Scrap paper ▪ Ribbon ▪ Small wood scraps ▪ Pins ▪ Paperclips ▪ Staples | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pictures of animals with different characteristics ▪ Tape ▪ Scissors ▪ Cardboard ▪ String ▪ Wire ▪ Foil ▪ Construction paper |
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PRESENTATION:

Talk about all the different kinds of “critters” the children have observed on the playground, parks and back yards. Be sure to include worms and bugs, birds and mammals, even humans. Explore with the class all the different ways critters get around, catch their prey, eat and defend themselves. Begin by briefly asking what the kids know about animals—what they eat, how they get around, whether they are active at night or in the daytime. Assemble the junk box but don’t tell the students exactly why it is being assembled.

DIRECTIONS:

Begin by asking students what they’ve observed animals doing— what they eat, how they catch their food, how they escape from predators, how they move, how and where they hide...Remind them that in real life, animals may slither, hop, climb. Some dig holes; others steal those holes. Some build nests and others use cavities in trees for their homes. Some just nest in tall grass. Some animals set traps to catch their food; others chase, wait, poison... Tell them that today they are going to create a “critter” and they will define those characteristics for it. Pass out ***Do-It-Yourself Critter Instructions*** (next page), one for each group.

Tell them they may use any of the materials in the junk box or around them.

Divide the group into small groups of 2 or 3, so that you have 10 groups. If possible, take the groups outdoors to complete the activity.

When all have completed their critters, have them write a description of their process, decisions and results. Ask them to state a conclusion for their work. Have groups use this description to explain their critters for the rest of the group. Have each small group ask the class to think of similar animals. This will help them see that while their designs are unique,

nature already uses the same principles.

PROCESSING THROUGH THE SIX PILLARS:

TIME:

45-60 minutes

Do-It-Yourself Critter Instructions

Suggestions for possible critter development; you can easily think of others. Critters might be made that:

- Could catch a slow-moving land animal
- Hide under the soil
- Move very quickly
- Hunt mammals at night
- Eat eggs with hard shells
- Live in the water
- Have a hard shell to protect them
- Live in rotten logs and stumps
- Can catch a flying insect
- Could dig up roots and search for grubs in them
- Make nests of leaves and grass
- Live in holes in trees
- Move very slowly
- Live in trees
- Stay in Iowa during the winter

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