

Activity 9

Animals: Where in the World?

Objective & Overview:

Each assigned a plastic toy animal, students will research their animal's diet, range, and status, then place the animal on a large floor map, identifying the continent where it lives.

Teacher Background Information:

The world has seven continents: North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and Antarctica. Many animals occur only on certain continents. This exercise will help students begin to understand *biodiversity*--the variety and differences between earth's creatures. Below is a list of popular wild species and the continents where they occur:

giraffe	Africa
lowland gorilla	Africa
lion	Africa
Burchell's or plains zebra	Africa
African savanna elephant	Africa
black and white (two-horned) rhinos	Africa
Nile hippopotamus	Africa
warthog	Africa
Asian elephant	Asia
greater one-horned rhinoceros	Asia
tiger	Asia
leopard	Africa and Asia
giant panda	Asia
gray kangaroo	Australia
Bactrian (two-humped) camel	Asia

orang utan
jaguar
gray wolf
emperor penguin
white-tailed deer

Asia
North and South America
North America, Europe, Asia
Antarctica
North and South America

Materials:

- one to two packages of small plastic zoo animals (see piece count on package)--enough for one identifiable animal per student
- a large, preferably laminated map that can be placed on the floor
- giant panda head cut-out
- reference book of the world's mammals (most popular toy animals will be mammals), and maybe one on birds and reptiles.

Directions:

1. This activity should be a lot of fun for kids grades three and four, but it requires that you do a bit of animal homework before you start--i.e. identifying any animals you might not know and looking up their home continents if necessary. Purchase one or two small bags of plastic zoo animals (each bag should cost a few dollars each). Check the piece count on the package to decide if only one bag is enough for your class, keeping in mind that you won't be able to use some hard-to-identify animals.
2. Empty the bag or bags and refer to the above list of animals and continents, sorting the animals you bought into continent piles and a pile of unknowns. Antarctica may be hard to cover, and penguins, seals, or whales are the best candidates here. Second hardest should be Australia, most likely to be represented by a kangaroo.
3. Don't worry if you miss a continent or two. Just explain to your students that these areas also have wildlife but that you're not going to explore them right now.

4. After you've sorted out your animals, bring them to class and introduce the activity. Explain that each student will be assigned an animal and be expected to write a short paper on their animal, looking in books to find out where the animal lives (habitat and continent), what it eats, and whether or not it is endangered with extinction. Hand out the animals and take your students to the library, helping them look up their animals, as needed.
5. Once the reports are done and ready, have your students sit in a large circle, within which you place the large world map. Place the giant panda head cut-out on Asia to start. Then, have each student stand and briefly present her or his animal, reading from her or his report. When finished, the student should hand in the report to you.
6. Upon completing the report, each student should attempt to place her or his animal on the continent where it lives. You can assist as needed.
7. When the animals are all placed, spend some time examining the map and the animals standing upon it. Emphasize that while on the map Africa and Asia may have the most animals on them, this does not mean that the other continents don't have plenty of other interesting creatures (thousands and thousands). It's just that some of the largest and most colorful or bizarre live in Africa and Asia and also, for one reason or another, they are among the most

recognized animals that we all know. (Discuss why this might be, using popular animated movies or children's books as examples.)

8. Point from continent to continent, asking students to name any creatures that are distinctive of those regions but that had not been represented by the toys. You may find that they know mostly North American examples. If you don't know an answer to where a creature lives, look it up in a reference book you have handy.

If you want, you can give the students their assigned animal figurine as a souvenir, or hold onto them for future use.

Extension idea:

If your students have not done the panda diorama exercise (Activity 3), you may want them to create a diorama featuring their assigned animal figurine. Students should research what the animal's habitat looks like and draw and cut out neighboring plants and animals, using books for reference. (See Activity 3 for guidance.)



giant panda