Classroom Guide – Friends in Fur Coats

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This classroom guide provides language arts activities that will involve other learning areas such as science. The purpose of this guide is to extend the themes of this story into learning activities that help to reinforce the main ideas of the book and to deepen understanding.

Story Summary

As Noah prepares for bed, he bids goodnight to all his stuffed animal toys and wishes that he, too, had soft, warm fur like them. In his dreams, Noah's stuffed animals come to life and show him the usefulness of their fur for the environments in which they live. Noah awakens with an appreciation of the animals' need for their fur coats and an understanding that their fur belongs on them, not people.

Lesson One: Warm & Fuzzy: Comprehending & Discussing Literature

Grade: 3

Objectives: To practice comprehending and discussing fictional text

Students will be able to:

1. Use text and illustrations to comprehend a fictional story
2. Determine the central message or moral in a story
3. Verbally share their thoughts and opinions about the text

Common Core Standards Addressed

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1
Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2
Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1.B
Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.

Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

Materials Needed

- Copy of <u>Friends in Fur Coats</u> by Claire Buchwald and Sarah Buchlaw
- A stuffed animal for each child in the class (ask students to bring one in for the day of the lesson, but be sure to have extras on hand for students who either forget theirs or don't have one)

<u>Lesson Procedure</u>

Opening

1. Have students take out their stuffed animal.
2. Give students the opportunity to share the name of their stuffed animal and where they got it. Sharing should be optional since not all students will be comfortable doing this—especially if they are just borrowing the animal (though they should feel welcome to participate and make up a name for the animal on the spot.)
3. Tell the students you are going to read a story about a boy who has lots of stuffed animals.

Body

1. Read aloud <u>Friends in Fur Coats</u> to the class.

Activity

1. Have a class discussion about the book using the following ideas & questions:
   - What did Noah ask his stuffed animals after wishing them good night? (Why do you get to have a fur coat?—a literal text reference.)
   - Why do you think he asked them this? (The animals are soft and can keep warm with their coats— inferential answer based on text.)
   - What do you think the illustrator was trying to show in the series of pictures where the grass and trees slowly begin filling Noah's room? (He was starting to fall asleep and dream—inferential answer based on illustrations.)
   - How did each animal use their fur coat? (Various answers.—literal answer based on text).
   - What do you think the central message or moral of this story is and why? (Animals need their fur coats to survive—literal answer based on numerous text

examples **and** people should not kill animals to use their fur coats—inferential & literal answer based on text from the story and For Parents and Adults section.)

- If you chose to discuss the ethics of killing animals for fur, you can use the section at the end of the book as a guide. Additionally, you may want to discuss whether students think killing animals for fur may sometimes be justified if the people don't have other ways to keep warm. A good example would be Inuit who live in remote areas of Alaska and Canada and who also use the animals' flesh as a source of food.

Closure

Allow students to share how the real version of their stuffed animal might use their fur to survive in the wild. Assist students if they are having trouble.

Extension

1. Have students research the history of fur use by humans and how it impacted early settlers and animal populations.
2. Have students research alternatives to fur, including faux fur made of polyester and other non-animal fibers.

Lesson Two: Copycatting Animals

Grades 1-3

Objectives: To understand the effect of the environment on an animal's physical traits

Students will be able to:

1. Understand how physical traits of animals can be influenced by their environment
2. Discuss how humans can solve problems by mimicking animals' physical traits

Next Generation Science Standards Addressed

3-LS3-2

Use evidence to support the explanation that traits can be influenced by the environment. [Clarification Statement: Examples of the environment affecting a trait could include normally tall plants grown with insufficient water are stunted; and, a pet dog that is given too much food and little exercise may become overweight.]

1-LS1-1. (Extension Activity 3)

Use materials to design a solution to a human problem by mimicking how plants and/or animals use their external parts to help them survive, grow, and meet their needs.* [Clarification Statement: Examples of human problems that can be solved by mimicking plant or animal solutions could include designing clothing or equipment to protect bicyclists by mimicking turtle shells, acorn shells, and animal scales; stabilizing structures by mimicking animal tails and roots on plants; keeping out intruders by mimicking thorns on branches and animal quills; and, detecting intruders by mimicking eyes and ears.] (extension activity)

Materials Needed

- Copy of <u>Friends in Fur Coats</u> by Claire Buchwald and Sarah Buchlaw
- "Animals and Their Environments" worksheet for every student in clas

Preparations

- Make copies of "Animals and Their Environments" worksheet for every student in class (or make them available online to be completed electronically).

Lesson Procedure

Opening

    Tell the students you are going to read them a story that features many different types of fur-bearing animals and you want them to listen for how each animal's fur helps them to survive in the environment in which they live.

Body

    Read aloud <u>Friends in Fur Coats</u>.

Activity

1. Pass out the "Animals and their Environments" worksheets or have students log into their computers and access the file.
2. Read the book aloud for a second time, pausing after each new animal is introduced.
3. Give students time to fill out the worksheet during the pauses.
4. At the end of the book, discuss the students' answers as a group.

Closure

Tell students that observing animals and how they use their physical traits in their environments can help humans solve their problems. Choose one of the examples from [Biomimicry: 7 Clever Technologies Inspired by Nature](#) and share it with students.

Extension

- Have students come up with other examples of other real fur-bearing animals and how they use their fur (for example, polar bears, dogs, chimpanzees, etc.)
- Have students draw pictures of imaginary fur-bearing animals and set them in environments where they would thrive based on their fur or other physical traits.
- Reinforce that many human advances have come from humans patterning designs after animals. Share [Biomimicry: 7 Clever Technologies Inspired by Nature](#) and [7 Pieces of Technology Modeled after Animals](#) with students—either by summarizing and presenting the content to them and/or sharing the links with them.
  Have the students work in small groups to come up with solutions to human problems (suggestions below) by mimicking a physical trait of an animal.
  - Global warming
  - Species extinction
  - Plastic pollution

Name_____

Animals and Their Environments

	Animal	Environment	Physical Trait

Lesson Three: Where the Wild & Furry Things Are

Grades 3-5

Objectives: To compare and contrast two stories

Students will:

1. Find similarities and differences between two picture books
2. Identify key elements of a story (characters, setting, plot and lessons or themes)

Common Core Standards Addressed

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7
Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

Materials Needed

- Copy of Friends in Fur Coats by Claire Buchwald and Sarah Buchlaw
- Copy of Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak
- Worksheet "Comparing Two Stories"

Preparations

- Be familiar with both books.
- Make copies of "Comparing Two Stories" worksheets for every student in the class (or make them available online to be completed electronically).

Lesson Procedure

Opening

Tell students you will be reading two different stories and you want them to be thinking about how they are alike and how they are different.

Body

Read aloud Friends in Fur Coats.

Activity

1. Have students individually or in pairs fill out the worksheet "Comparing Two Stories."
2. Bring the students back together for a group discussion and sharing of their findings. Make sure the following questions and points are addressed:

- How are the boys the same and different between the two stories? What about the "wild things?"
- How were the settings the same and different? How did the illustrators show that the boys were gradually beginning to daydream or dream during sleep? (Illustrations in both books capture this.)
- How are the "wild things" the same and different in the stories?
- How were the events of the book the same and different?
- Was there a moral or lesson to each of the books? What were they?

Closure

1. Have students vote (with a showing of hands or online) for which book they found more **entertaining**. Record the results on a whiteboard or chart paper.
2. Have students vote (with a showing of hands or online) for which story they thought had a **moral or lesson that they identified with more.** Record the results on a whiteboard or chart paper.
3. Compare the results and discuss any differences.
4. Discuss with the students how people read for different purposes (i.e. to be entertained, inspired, educated, etc.). Is it possible that a book can do all those things?

Extensions

1. Have students create their own story about interacting with wild animals. What animals would be in their story and what would they do? Is there a moral or lesson to their story? How do they want the reader of their story to feel (entertained, inspired, educated, etc.)?

2. Tell students that both authors of the featured stories have written other books. Make available copies of Claire Buchwald and Maurice Sendak's books in your classroom library for students to read. Encourage students to look for any common themes among the author's own books and each other's.

   Claire Buchwald:
   - Max Talks to Me
   - Are You Ready for Me?

   Maurice Sendak:

   - Outside Over There
   - Pierre: A Cautionary Take in 5 Chapters and a Prologue
   - Alligators All Around

Name_____

Comparing Two Stories

	Title 1	Title 2
Characters		
Setting		
Main Events/Plot		
Moral or Lesson		