



The Creature Feature Cafe

Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!
-Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz



Summary

Fourth grade students will apply interesting information and facts from their research, on a specific New York State animal, to write a variety of animal theme poems that demonstrate their knowledge, feelings, and ideas. The students will create a portfolio of poems using their research of one New York State animal and design a habitat collage, which will be used as a background for the Creature Feature Cafe. The students will read aloud a poem they will write, in a café-like setting, for other students at the school, their parents, and the faculty.

Need and Rationale

The fourth grade curriculum is filled to the brim with content. Teachers are doing their best to help students meet the New York State standards, but often the rigor of the curriculum doesn't allow enough time for students to slow down and make meaning from their learning. The teachers are interested in finding ways to complement and integrate the science content with the English language arts curriculum.

Traditionally, the fourth grade students, within an inclusion class, have been engaged in the research of New York State animals. The students used the acquired information and facts to write a structured field guide report on five different New York State animals. The research and report writing extended well beyond the 45 minutes of the scheduled science period and often spilled over into other subject areas. Many of the students with special needs needed additional support, modification, stamina, and encouragement to complete the lengthy two month assignment.

This year, the classroom teacher, the inclusion teacher, the teaching assistant, and the

media specialist agreed to restructure the New York State animal field guide report and integrate a unit of study on poetry, which will be taught during writers' workshop. Writing poetry, using their research of one New York State animal, will offer another way to present information, to use the power of language, and to get students to think about their knowledge in new and deeper ways. Each student will write a collection of free-verse poems about the New York State animal he/she will research. The integration of animal research and poetry writing will take place during the scheduled science period as well as during writers' workshop. The special area teachers will work collaboratively with the class to reinforce and support learning. The culminating activity will be The Creature Feature Café where students will read an animal poem, in a café-like setting, for parents, faculty, and students at the school. The amount of time spent on the project would be reduced from 60 days to 22 days, which will allow time for additional science curriculum to be covered before the New York State Science Assessment. Integrating reading and writing of poetry through the content area of science will help to promote a deeper understanding for all students.

Curriculum, Grades, and Population

Currently, there are 19 fourth grade students within this inclusion classroom. Four of the students receive resource room support. Six of the students receive Academic Intervention Services (AIS) in the areas of reading and writing. Three of the students receive speech and language services, and two of the students receive ESL support. The special education teacher and a teaching assistant work daily, within the classroom, for two 45 minute periods. The students in this fourth grade classroom participate in reading and writing workshop through Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. They will complete three New York State Assessments this year, two of which will be English language arts and science.



Objectives

We want our students to develop an appreciation for poetry as they learn to write with depth and feeling. We want them to learn to use a variety of poetic devices in their writing, which include line breaks, white space, figurative language, strong verbs, repetition, and voice. We want them to develop more proficiency with the writing process, which includes gathering and nurturing ideas, revising, editing, and publishing. We want them to work together as a community to share their ideas with their writing partners, and to create a collage of habitats that represent all of the animals being represented.



Impact of Student Learning and Teacher Practice

As a result of this project, teacher practice will reach beyond the classroom to increase collaboration, communication, and planning with the school staff. By integrating reading and writing in the content area, information can be studied deeper with less time constraints. We will learn that the power of poetry has tremendous potential across the curriculum and throughout the year. We will have inspired a class full of writers who now regard themselves as poets. Students will learn to write in a genre that makes it easier for them to take risks as a writer by experimenting with their “poetic license”.



Activities

The first activities will involve gathering and ordering dozens of poetry books, establishing a poetry corner, and immersing students in listening to, reading and enjoying all kinds of poems. Minilessons will be planned for each day of the poetry study. The students will receive poetry journals to collect favorite poems, and to record their thoughts and ideas. They will learn how to use information from their animal research to compose a poem. The class will write a group poem. The students will illustrate their poems and begin collecting them in a portfolio. They will write everyday. Teachers will conference

and/or conduct strategy lessons with small groups of students. The students will select a poem to share with the audience at the café and practice reading it. The class will create a habitat collage for the background of the café. The students will create a costume symbol to represent their animal. Each animal will come alive through a poetry reading at the café.

Timeline

Books and materials for the poetry study will be ordered by February 8, 2008.

The students will be finishing their animal research by March 19, 2008. A poetry immersion will take place from March 17 – 19, 2008. The poetry study will begin on March 25, 2008 and continue throughout April, which is National Poetry Month. The Creature Feature Café will open as the culminating activity on Tuesday, April 29, 2008.

NYS Standards

ELA Standard 1 will be addressed, as students will gather and interpret information from their notes/research on a specific New York State animal, and use the process of pre-writing, drafting, revising and proofreading their poems. ELA Standard 2 will be addressed as they read a variety of poetry books intended for young readers. ELA Standard 3 will be addressed as the students will monitor and adjust their oral reading presentations of their poems at the café. ELA Standard 4 will be addressed as students work with their writing partners to respond to each others' ideas about their poems.

Assessment

Students participating in this project will be evaluated in a variety of ways.

Individual conferences will take place daily, as teachers keep anecdotal records on each student. The conferring notes will be used to determine additional minilessons throughout the project. A rubric to assess student portfolios will be designed prior to the start of the poetry study.



Collaboration

There will be regular planning and collaboration between and among the teachers involved with the poetry study. In addition, a member of the local Arts Coalition will be invited to school to share her craft and love of poetry. The local library will be contacted about the study and a special collection of poetry will be reserved for our students.

Itemized Budget



Professional memberships and journals: NCTE \$65, IRA \$61, ASCD \$49

Books-Georgia Heard's poetry: Awakening the Heart \$17.50, Creatures of the Earth \$10.95

Fooling With Words by B. Moyers \$11.86, Climb Inside a Poem \$58, Exploring Poetry \$19

Naomi S. Nye's poetry: Come With Me \$16.99, Red Suitcase \$15.50;

Practical Poetry \$21, Guided Writing \$21, The Workshop Book \$24, Getting Started \$19

Resourceful Writing Teacher \$25, Wishes, Lies and Dreams \$13.95, Fold Me a Poem \$16

Wonderful Words \$16.95, Sweet and Sour Animal Book \$9.95, If Not For The Cat \$16.99

Insect Soup \$14.95, Peculiar Zoo \$14.95, Animal Poems \$14.95

D. Florian books: On the Wing \$16, Omnibeasts \$18, Beast Feast \$16, Insectopedia \$16

Lizards, Frogs, and Polliwogs \$16, Give Them Poetry \$42, Mammalabilia \$16,

Laugh-eteria \$17, Zoo's Who \$17, Amazing Animals of the World 3 \$199

Ralph Fletcher's Poetry Matters 21 @ \$5.99 (\$119.80)

Supplies: burlap 20 yds @4.99 yd (\$99.80), Sandisk flashdrive \$59.98, Portfolio binders w/

12 sleeves 20 @ \$7.38 (\$147.60), Papermate flairs 33 x 3 colors (\$99.00), post-it notes

\$22.99, Steno notebooks 20 @ \$1.19 (\$23.80),

TOTAL: \$1499.46

Thank you for your consideration of *The Creature Feature Café* grant proposal.