

MUTUAL of OMAHA'S
WILD KINGDOM

Tune in Sundays at 7pm E/P

How Dangerous are They?

Objective

These activities are designed to encourage critical thinking; to challenge preconceived notions about animal behavior; to teach students about dangerous animals and animal behavior; and to build and practice effective research skills.

Grades

2-6

Activity 1: Please Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood

Some animals just get a bad rap. Take snakes and sharks, wolves and wolverines, bats and grizzly bears, for instance. Many people are terrified at the mere mention of them. But is this justified? Do some research to investigate humans' perception of animals vs. the facts.

1. Choose a "misunderstood" animal (see examples below). Using animal encyclopedias, general encyclopedias, library books or the Internet, research the facts about this animal. Does it kill humans? How many per year?
2. Write a poem, limerick or song about this animal. Be sure to include plenty of detail and factual information.

Examples:

Sea snakes – its highly toxic venom makes it one of the most powerful poisonous snakes in the world, yet it is surprisingly gentle

Wolverine – the subject of trickster tales in Native Indian mythology and folklore; known for being a vicious killer...but what is the wolverine really like?

Sharks – how dangerous are they really?

Grizzly bears – very rarely kill a human (less than 5 a year)

Others: bats, spiders, pigs

Activity 2: World's Deadliest Animals

1. What makes animals deadly? Write the following categories on the board and ask students for examples.
 - Sting (example: toxin on tentacles of box jellyfish can kill humans in minutes)
 - Bite (example: powerful jaws of a saltwater crocodile can break a human in two!)

- Venom (example: poisonous spiders, poisonous snakes)
 - Allergic reactions (example: some people are allergic to bee venom)
 - Physical attacks by powerful animals
 - Other (rabies, disease-carrying insects, e.g. mosquitoes)
2. Class project: Make a list of the world's deadliest animals. Begin by having students raise their hands to call out ideas for the list. Make asterisks next to those the group deems most dangerous. Then follow up with research in small groups to find actual statistics.

(Examples: poison dart frog, box jellyfish, Indian cobra, saltwater crocodile, tiger, lion, great white shark, elephant, polar bear)

Activity 3: All About Snakes

1. Group project: Make a chart listing snakes in different categories.
2. Extension: See if you can make a list of snakes ranked from deadliest to least dangerous. Do this in pencil and use arrows to figure out what goes where. The purpose of this activity is not to produce a precise scientific list, but rather to discuss, dispute, and fact-find.

- Venomous Snakes
(examples: Adder, Black Mamba, Cobra, Cottonmouth, Diamondback, King Cobra, Pit Viper, Rattlesnake, Sea Snake, Taipan, Tiger Snake)
- Constricting Snakes (kill by constricting prey)
(example: Pythons, Boa Constrictors)
- Biggest Snakes
(example: Anaconda and Reticulated Python)
- Smallest Snakes
(example: Blind Snakes are the smallest)
- Common Pet Snakes
(examples: corn snake, milk snake, king snake, ball python)

