

AMAZEMENT IN THE BASEMENT: COMPARING CREATURES ACTIVITY

GRADE LEVEL: 3-5



Standards Connection

- SEPs: Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions, Engaging in Argument from Evidence
- DCIs: LS1.A, LS3.A, LS3.B, LS4.C, LS4.D
- CCCs: Patterns, Systems and System Models, Structure and Function

Objectives

- Students will observe and compare traits of two different animal specimens
- Students will identify the habitat where each specimen lives
- Students will analyze how adaptations help organisms survive in their habitats

Key Vocabulary

- Specimen: Any object (animal, plant, or non-living) that is preserved for scientific use. Specimens can be whole or incomplete and can include skeletons, skins, flowers, minerals, etc.
- Habitat: The place where an animal or plant lives
- Trait: A feature of a plant or animal, like its size, color, or body parts
- Adaptation: A trait that helps a plant or animal live in its habitat

Materials

- Specimen displays in the exhibit
- Two worksheet printouts: one with sentence frames and another with open response lines to support different learning approaches.
- Pencils and/or colored pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

We recommend completing the Introduction section in the classroom or as a group prior to entering the Museum. The Discussion and Wrap-Up section can then be conducted back in the classroom following your field trip.

Introduction (5-10 minutes)

- Begin by asking students:
 - What are some different types of habitats? What is that habitat like? Can you describe it?
 - Who else has a habitat to share? What are some things that make that habitat different from the one your peer shared?
 - Have you seen animals that live in very different habitats (e.g., the ocean and the desert)? Do they look similar or different? Why?
- Explain that in the exhibit, they will be comparing two museum specimens to explore how animals have different traits (or adaptations) that help them survive in different habitats.

Exploration (20 minutes)

- Support students as they explore the exhibit and choose two animal specimens from different habitats (e.g., a pelican and a colorful parrot).
 - To adjust for younger students and ELLs, name two habitats for students to look for animals from. For example, choose one animal that lives in the desert and one animal that lives in a pond.
- Distribute worksheets and have students:
 - Draw each specimen and label it.
 - Describe adaptations that each specimen has and based on those, share what habitat they think it lives in.
 - Answer the questions:
 - » What is one trait that each specimen has? How does that adaptation help the specimen survive where it lives?
 - » What differences do you observe between the two specimens?
 - » What do you think would happen if the specimens switched habitats? Would they survive in the habitat of the other specimen?
- Encourage students to think about how things like color, shell, claws, or size help the animal in its specific habitat.

Discussion and Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

- Have students share their comparisons in small groups.
- Lead a class discussion using guiding questions:
 - What did you notice about the two animals?
 - How are their adaptations different or the same?
 - Why do you think animals in different habitats need different adaptations?
- Reinforce the idea that animals have adaptations that help them survive in the place they live.

Extension Ideas

- Set up a sorting activity station where students group plant/animal figurines or photos by their habitats or traits.
- Let students choose two animals from a book or video and compare their habitats and adaptations.
- Create a bulletin board display showing animals from different habitats and their key traits or adaptations.

Name _____

Date _____

AMAZEMENT IN THE BASEMENT: COMPARING CREATURES

Directions: Find two animal specimens that live in different habitats. Draw each one. Label their traits, or what makes them special (e.g., color, size, fur, leaves, teeth).

Specimen 1

Habitat: _____

Traits: _____

Specimen 2

Habitat: _____

Traits: _____

What is one trait that each specimen has? How does that trait help the specimen survive where it lives?

Specimen 1: The _____ has _____ (trait)
which helps it _____ in the
_____ (habitat).

Specimen 2: The _____ has _____ (trait)
which helps it _____ in the
_____ (habitat).

What differences do you observe between the two specimens?

One difference I see is that the _____ (specimen 1)
has _____ (trait), but the _____ (specimen 2)
has _____ (different trait).

Another difference I see is that the _____ (specimen 1)
has _____ (trait), but the _____ (specimen 2)
has _____ (different trait).

What do you think would happen if the specimens switched habitats? Would they survive in the habitat of the other specimen?

If the _____ (specimen 1) lived in the _____
(habitat of specimen 2), it might _____
because it _____.

If the _____ (specimen 2) lived in the _____
(habitat of specimen 1), it might _____
because it _____.

Name _____

Date _____

AMAZEMENT IN THE BASEMENT: COMPARING CREATURES

Directions: Find two animal specimens that live in different habitats. Draw each one. Label their traits, or what makes them special (e.g., color, size, fur, leaves, teeth).

Specimen 1

Habitat: _____

Traits: _____

Specimen 2

Habitat: _____

Traits: _____

What is one trait that each specimen has? How does that trait help the specimen survive where it lives?

What differences do you observe between the two specimens?

What do you think would happen if the specimens switched habitats? Would they survive in the habitat of the other specimen?