

What Bear Goes Where?

Objectives

Students will (1) identify three species of bears and their habitats, and (2) generalize that animals have adapted in order to live where they do.

Method

Students construct posters of three different bear habitats.

Materials

Pictures of the three North American bear species, three large sheets of paper with the outline of one bear species on each and labeled construction paper, pencils, scissors, glue

Background

Polar bears have long necks, slender heads, and are white in appearance. They live along the Arctic coasts, mostly on the polar ice. The carnivorous polar bears feed mainly on fish and seals. Their thick fur keeps them warm, and the

webbing between their toes makes them good swimmers. Unlike other bears, they have fur on the soles of their feet.

Grizzly bears can dig up most of their food and can catch fish with their long claws. They also have a distinctive hump between their shoulders. They eat roots, tubers, gophers, marmots, and smaller rodents as well as carrion (rotten meat). They occasionally kill a larger animal for food. Grizzlies tend to live in the edges of forests but feed mostly in mountain meadows. They have wide heads and a “dished” face.

Black bears are quiet, shy animals that live in a variety of habitats from forests to brush or chaparral. They eat mostly nuts, berries, and fruit. They also eat rodents and insects, and they occasionally kill larger animals for food. The black bear may be black, auburn, or cinnamon. Black bears are smaller than grizzlies or polar bears and have heads that are more pointed.

The major purpose of this activity is for students to recognize that animals can adapt to living in different environments, as shown in the example of three different kinds of bears.

Procedure

1. Show the students pictures of the three different species of bears found in North America. Name the three bears. Ask students to discuss the similarities and differences between bears.
2. Ask the students to imagine the place where each bear lives. Talk about the similarities and differences of these regions. Ask the students to think about how each bear looks and whether its features help it to live where it lives. Talk about the different adaptations of each of the bear species.

Grade Level: K-4

Subject Areas: Science, Environmental Education, Expressive Arts

Duration: one 30-minute session

Group Size: three groups of three to six students each; increase groups as necessary for class size

Setting: indoors

Conceptual Framework Topic Reference: CAIIA, CAIIA1a

Key Terms: alike, different, adapt, survive, habitat

Appendices: Early Childhood

- Distribute three large sheets of paper. Draw an outline of one of the bear species in the center of each sheet, and label it accordingly. (A photo of each bear will serve just as well.)

NOTE: The outline of each bear can be projected onto a chalkboard or a large piece of paper taped to a wall. Adjust the projected image until the bear's shoulder height is life size. The bear's outline then can be drawn by tracing the projected image.

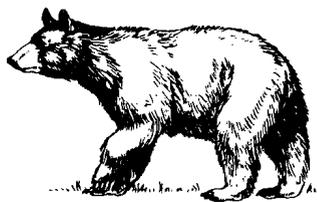
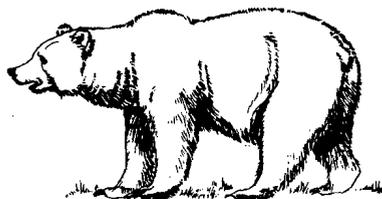
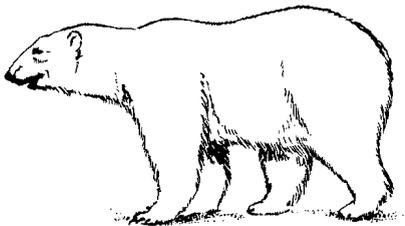
- Divide the students into three groups. Give each group one of the sheets of paper with the outline of a bear species and a supply of construction paper, pencils, and scissors.
- Have students in each group draw and cut out elements of the habitat of their bear (trees, grassy meadows, and rocks for the grizzly; blocks of ice, snow, fish, and seals for the polar bear; forest trees, bushes, nuts, fruits, and berries for the black bear). Then glue these elements around the picture of their bear. (Make sure that examples of all major habitat needs are included: food, water, shelter, and space in which to live.)
- Display the finished posters, and ask the students what they have learned about bears and where bears live. Discuss how each environment has characteristic life forms that have adapted to its climate, kinds of available food, and other factors. Emphasize that all animals are adapted to survive in their environment.

Aquatic Extensions

- Look at pictures of three different species of fish and discuss their similarities and differences. Imagine the place where each fish lives. Draw a picture of each fish in a place where you think it could live.
- Find out more about the adaptations of different kinds of fish that make it possible for them to live in certain environments. See the Project WILD Aquatic activity "Fashion a Fish."
- Help make a bulletin board that shows "What Fish Goes Where?" Show fish that live in ponds, fish that live in lakes, fish that live in streams, fish that live in rivers, and fish that live in oceans. Include a picture of the appropriate habitat along with a picture of the fish. See the Project WILD Aquatic activity "Fishy Who's Who."

Evaluation

- Describe the three species of bears, what they eat, where they live, and what each species looks like.
- If someone took polar bears to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming and took grizzly bears to the Arctic coast, do you think the bears would be able to live in their new homes? Why or why not?



© Pat Oldham 1993