



DALLAS ARBORETUM

Education

Garden STEM at Home
First Impressions



WE GROW MINDS, TOO.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS



OBJECTIVE:

STUDENTS WILL DISTINGUISH BETWEEN REACTIONS TO ANIMALS BASED ON MYTH OR REALITY AND RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF ANIMALS' ROLES IN ECOSYSTEMS.

SOURCE

Project WILD K-12 Curriculum & Activity Guide

BACKGROUND

People respond to different animals in a variety of ways. Sometimes, their reaction is based on fear, such as with spiders or snakes. People's first reaction may even be to harm the creature, yet many spiders and snakes are completely harmless to people.

Different backgrounds, both personal and cultural, can result in people viewing animals in quite different ways. While bats may cause fear for some, they are viewed as a sign of good luck in China.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prepare a series of animal photo cards showing a variety of different animals. Resources linked below include TPWD, National Geographic and WWF photos.
2. As you show each photo, ask students to share the first word that comes to mind. Depending on age, either record as a group or ask each student to track their own.
3. Once complete, discuss the words for each animal and identify those that generated the most dislike or fearful responses and those that seemed most favorable. Discuss initial thoughts about why these groups emerged.
4. Ask students to choose the animal that seems most scary or disliked and do more research about the animal's contributions to the ecosystem. If possible, arrange for an expert about that animal to teach more about it.
5. Ask students to choose an additional animal from the list which was not on their favored list. Ask students to do further research to learn more about the animal, including: researching if students' fearful reaction was warranted or based on misinformation and their role in their specific ecosystem.
6. Present research in students' chosen method(s).

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Project WILD First Impressions STEM Connections:

<https://www.fishwildlife.org/projectwild/step-stem-and-wild-work/first-impressions>

Project WILD First Impressions Animal Cards:

https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/5815/3443/9954/First_Impressions.pdf

TPWD Wildlife Fact Sheets:

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/huntwild/wild/species/>

National Geographic Animal Facts and Pictures:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/facts-pictures/>

World Wildlife Fund Terrifying Animal Facts:

<https://www.wwf.org.au/news/blogs/11-terrifying-animal-facts#gs.hp4p88>