

ANIMALIA ACTIVITIES

An Interactive Language Arts Support Program



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Joyous Journals

In many Animalia episodes, we see Zoe writing on her PDA, using it as a combination diary and thinking tool.

Focus: Keeping a journal; responding to literature

Materials needed: Any kind of portable pad with blank or lined pages. You can make a quick journal by cutting and stapling several sheets of regular paper together into a just-right size.

What to do and how:

1. If you keep your own journal or writer's notebook, share it with kids so they can see that adults really do use this genre of writing.

2. Invite kids to use their journals to record what happens over the course of a whole day. Encourage them to jot down what they see, hear, notice and feel about events. They can also interview other people and note their comments in the journal. Depending on their age, kids may do this mostly in drawing, writing or a mix of both.

3. Keeping a reading journal. A natural extension of the daily observation journal is a reading journal, where kids record responses to the books they are reading at home or in school. Smart readers have several ways that they think about what they read:

Visualize. Draw pictures - -what scenes did you envision, how did you see certain characters or events?

Ask questions: What did you wonder about while reading? What questions would you ask the author or a main character?

Make connections: What did the book remind you of in your own life, around the neighborhood, or in other books you have read, or TV programs you've seen?

Determine importance. What was the most important or outstanding part of the book – and why?

Parents: You can use reader's journals at bedtime as a part of your read-aloud ritual. After you have read a book together, spend a few minutes drawing and writing your reactions to the story. Then exchange or read journals aloud and show your drawings to each other.



Join the Literature Circle

Under the guidance of Animalia's librarian, Reenie Rhino, Animalians love to read, talk about books together, and search for information.

Focus: Appreciating and discussing good literature

Materials needed: multiple copies (3-6) of several different children's books; art materials for optional book projects

Literature Circles are much like the voluntary reading groups that many lifelong adult readers attend. The principles are simple: kids pick a book they'd like to read and also some friends to read it with – then they meet to discuss the book, either by stopping a few times on the way through the book, or having one big meeting after the whole book is completed.

What to do and how:

1. Gather multiple copies of various kid-friendly titles, and help each child to decide which one they would most like to read. You can ensure this by book-talking, giving a summary (don't tell the ending!), or by having kids read the first page of all the different choices.
2. Form small groups around book choices. Typically this will mean groups of 3-5 kids, with each group reading a different book. At home, this can simply mean a parent-child book club of two.
3. Provide time for groups to read their chosen books. Younger children might want to take turns reading the book out loud to each other, or let one volunteer member be the reader. Older kids may read the book silently or even as homework. Encourage kids to stop and think as they read, making notes about aspects of the story they want to talk about with their friends when the group gathers for discussion.
4. Have periodic book club meetings on the way through the book. For picture books, kids can stop halfway through – before the climax or resolution -- to talk about the characters and events, and to predict possible endings. For chapter books, have kids divide the book into three or four sections, and have a Literature Circle meeting after each chunk.

5. After books and discussions are done, kids may choose to do a book project – acting out a scene, creating a new ending, designing a new cover for the book, or making an advertisement to get others excited about the book.

Food for Thought: Sometimes both teachers and parents assume that they should always pick the books kids read. And often we grownups do introduce kids to books that they enjoy and treasure. But children also must select their own reading materials from a wide range of choices. Just as active adult readers like to choose their own books, kids need the opportunity to develop their personal literary tastes by ranging widely and sampling lots of books. And just as with grownups, it is perfectly OK to abandon a book that isn't working for you – as long as you pick up another and keep reading!



Author, Author

Animalians are avid readers. For example, G'Bubu Gorilla loves reading everything from comic books to works by the controversial author, Peter Applebottom.

Focus: Reading comprehension and appreciation, writing

Materials needed: Copies of *Frog and Toad are Friends* by Arnold Lobel for the whole class. (Class sets of this classic book are found in almost all school libraries, and often classrooms as well). Alternately, you can put pages on an overhead, or simply read the book aloud.

What to do and how:

1. Begin by telling your students about Arnold Lobel's life and career. He wrote children's books for many years, and also a few songs. There are many websites where you can find this information. A couple are: <http://www.vernelson.com/children1.html> and <http://www.carolhurst.com/authors/alobel.html>. This latter site has plenty of background info on Lobel. Ask your kids if they've already read some of Lobel's books. (Likely, so, but repetition is the spice of life for kids.)
2. Introduce *Frog and Toad are Friends*. Read to them the first story in the book while they sit on the rug.
3. Ask kids what they think are some distinguishing characteristics of Lobel's writing so far and put these on a chart that can be added to later. (Probable ideas: repetition, short sentences, humor, etc.)
4. Have the kids pair up and read the next story together, looking for new characteristics or confirmation of those they already had seen. Have a whole class debrief and add new ideas to the chart.
5. Read story 3 (and perhaps a few more) in groups of four. Continue the conversation about features of Lobel's writing.
6. To complete the process, read one more story aloud, and have whole group wrap up the discussion of author attributes.
7. The next part of this mini-unit is asking kids to write their own Frog and Toad story. For the younger ones, this may be more of a drawing activity, and for the older ones it will include more writing along with illustrations included.

8. Provide class time to work on this, and after the kids finish a first draft, have them read their story aloud to a peer, checking for meaning and editing changes.
9. Read aloud these books in small groups. Then, ask for volunteers to read to the whole class.
10. Keep these books in the classroom for the children to read in the future.
11. At this point, continue with more Frog and Toad books. If you'd like to have a larger study, read more than just the one book. There are many other wonderful Lobel books featuring other characters.

Variations/Extensions: Ask the children to pick their own favorite writer and do a similar author study. Parents, this would be great to do at home with Eric Carle, Kevin Henkes, Cynthia Rylant, or any author that your child has gotten excited about.

Further explorations: If kids like a book, encourage them to read more books by that author at home.



Been to the Library Lately?

The center of life in Animalia is the Great Library, home of the Core and Animalia's wise ruler, Livingston T. Lion. While Livingstone is the "Keeper of the Core," Reenie Rhino is the head librarian.

Focus: Acquainting students with the local library, the children's section, nonfiction section, media selections and read-alouds.

Materials Needed: books from the library

With so much reading material online, have you been to the library lately? Have your kids? Probably your kids have been to the school library (if not, now's the time to start).

But where's the nearest public library to your school? Your kids may not have been there for a while – or regularly, or ever. If we hope to grow lifelong readers, we must show kids the way around a library -- so let's get started. Field trip!

If possible, speak with your librarian about your visit trip plan, and gather any suggestions from him/her you can. Depending on the age of your kids, these activities may vary in both length of time and choice of activity. A good library visit lasts at least 45 minutes.

What to do and how:

1. Before you go on your field trip, ask each child to write down two things they are interested in: soccer, forest fires, volcanoes, insects...a 3/5 card works well.
2. First stop: the children's collection. Have a pre-selected a children's book ready for you to read aloud once kids get settled in the library. You might want to highlight a Caldecott or Newberry award winner, to help kids become familiar with this extraordinary set of titles.
3. Next, have the kids cruise the books either randomly, or asking them each to find an award winning book to read for that day.
4. Now, take the kids to the non-fiction section. There, they bring out their cards with possible research topics and seek out books on that subject. Offer browsing time. With luck kids will find books they want to check out.
5. Next stop: the Media Center. Show your kids the books on tape, available video, music, et al. They'll love knowing these are resources for them. If

- the librarian has the time and the technology, she might offer kids a tour of the web, with surfing and safety tips.
6. Gather the kids together on the rug again and informally ask them what they learned today at the library. This quick closure will help them retain the experience.
 7. Most important of all: make sure that every kid ends up with a library card. This will probably call for parent involvement ahead of time.

Variations/Extensions: For a kid-friendly picture tour of the library check out <http://www.hud.gov/kids/field1.html>

Further explorations: Ask parents to help their kids get involved in their local library and its children's programming.



Make a Teaching Book

In the television series, Zoe and Alex are often called upon to read and write nonfiction text, often in urgent situations.

Focus: writing informational/nonfiction text

Materials needed: Assorted nonfiction books, magazines and web articles

We all love a good story, tale or yarn. But kids can get just as excited about nonfiction. When they get curious about spiders, dinosaurs, sharks, tidal waves, tornados, or volcanoes, kids will devour books!

Sometimes we call these nonfiction titles “teaching books,” because their authors are experts who are trying to teach readers about the topic. Kids can become specialists too, and teach their friends and family by writing a teaching book of their own.

1. Help each child find a topic of burning interest --something they are truly eager to investigate and become a “specialist” on.
2. Help kids find multiple sources on their chosen topic: several books, articles, TV shows, etc. Librarians are great at helping children find such “text sets.” For bigger kids, have them keep simple notes about what unique facts they are picking up from different sources along the way.
3. Once kids have marinated deeply in their topic, have them write a “teaching book,” including the following ingredients.
 - ▶ Cover with Title, Picture and Author’s Name
 - ▶ Dedication Page
 - ▶ Table of Contents
 - ▶ Chapters/PagesBig kids may fill real chapters with text. For younger kids, a simple formula is to have them create a photo essay: one picture or drawing per page, with a word or phrase of text elaborating upon it.
 - ▶ About the Author (on back cover)
5. In a teaching book, it may help for kids to use a question and answer framework for the main body of the book. For a book about extreme weather, kids might follow this guide in creating pages:

Where are ___ found?

What do they look and sound like?

What causes ___?

What kind of damage do _____ cause?

How can we do to protect ourselves from ___?

4. Have an author reading, a celebratory read-aloud, and autographing session.
Enter the book in an honored place in the classroom or home library.



Visit the Message Center

Throughout the Animalia series, both kids and animals use short pieces of writing to help make decisions, form plans, or keep records – in school we call this “writing to learn” and around the house we probably just call it “notes.”

Materials needed: A bulletin or white board, suitable for posting sticky notes or other small bits of writing; a variety of writing materials, including assorted paper, sticky notes, colored markers and pens; push-pins, magnets or tape, as needed.

What to do and how:

1. Introduce the idea of note-writing to kids. In school, children are probably already writing notes to each other that teachers sometimes discourage! But now we are legalizing this kind of writing. We are channeling kids’ impulses to write letters into the business of the classroom.
2. Tell kids there are formal, careful letters that we might send to relative through the mail or email. But around the house (or the classroom) we also use short bits of writing to help us communicate, remind ourselves or others of important events, or just help us organize our thoughts. Give examples like grocery lists, birthday or holiday lists, pro and con lists.
3. Inaugurate the message board by dramatically posting several relevant notes from you:
Jot me a note if you’d like to read at Sharing Circle today.
Has anyone seen my red glasses?
What did you think about yesterday’s pizza lunch?
What do we need to bring on our field trip Friday?
4. Invite kids to answer your notes with their own (not all at once!) using the supplies at hand. Invite them to also initiate new correspondence, with you and with other kids. At the end of the day, read aloud some exchanges as highlights and examples for future use.
5. When kids post a question to you, try to post an answer on the same day, so they get immediate feedback.

Parents: A family message board works in just the same way. (You may be already doing much of this kind of writing around the house anyway – this just organizes it.) Encourage the other adults in the family and older children to post also, so your youngest writers have plenty of models and audiences.



Writing: Activity 7

Write an Alphabet Book

Animalia is based on the beautiful alphabet book by Graeme Base – one of the best-selling children’s books in the English language.

Focus: Reading, writing, drawing, language

Materials Needed: A copy of *Animalia*, other assorted alphabet books, pencils, markers, materials for home-made books

We think the best alphabet book of all is *Animalia* by Graeme Base. If you haven’t read the book yourself or haven’t yet read it to your kids, definitely do! You can see where our wonderful Animalians first started, and enjoy their antics on the page in addition to your TV.

What to do and how:

1. Scour your library and classroom for assorted alphabet books you think your kids would enjoy.
2. Read *Animalia* aloud to your kids. Discuss the words he uses and explain alliteration. Also notice the great illustrations. Which do they like best? Also, ask them to find the Boy. He’s there on every page, though often hidden. Leave the book out for them to look at later.
3. Read aloud a couple other alphabet books. Discuss both the words and illustration in these other catchy books. How are they different? The same? How are the pictures different from each other. Are these funny books? Serious?
4. Assign letters of the alphabet to individuals, partners, or groups. Topics could be other animals than jungle, say dinosaurs or insects.
5. Ask your kids to look online for information about their topic if time permits, or graze the library for ideas.
6. Ask kids to write a sentence for each page, including a noun, verb, and two describing words -- plus whatever other words they want.
7. Then kids should illustrate each page, using their own illustrations, photos cut from magazines, or downloaded pictures from the web.
8. Create the actual book from cardboard, wallpaper, and other found materials. Bind with a length of ribbon, cord, or staples.
9. Have the groups read their books to each other, and enter into your classroom or school library.

Variations/Extensions: Arrange for your students to read their books to a Kindergarten class.

Further explorations: There are other formula-driven children's books, such as Remy Charlip's *Fortunately, Unfortunately* or *The Magic School Bus* series. Kids can write their own imitations, following the authors' template.



Animalia Regalia

There are lots of authors in Animalia. One star writer is Zoe, who not only wins the storytelling contest, but also teaches illiterate alligator Allegra to write.

Focus: Visual literacy, writing

Materials needed: paper, pencils, markers, home made books, story board and if possible, story map

You've watched Animalia with your kids -- now it's time to have them write their own Animalia shows.

What to do and how:

1. As a whole group, list the characters of the show.
2. Now, write down the elements of the setting, including the Great Library, Ancient Archives, G'Bubu's Treehouse, the Land of Over and Beyond, etc. There's a lot to think about here, as Animalia expands further with each episode.
3. Review some of the problems that have arisen in different shows and list them also.
4. Now it's time to create all-new episodes. Have your students get in groups of three or four to brainstorm ideas for stories. They can use the Animalian characters only, or introduce plausible new characters if they like.
5. Hand out the story map to the kids. To be found at: http://www2.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/pdf/l/lessonplans_graphicorg_pdfs_storymap.pdf. Explain that they need to fill in the boxes as a way of planning their stories.
6. Once the maps are completed, the kids can begin a draft of their new episode. Conferring informally with each other should be encouraged.
7. Older kids can write and illustrate their books, or if you want more challenge, confine them to words only. The younger ones' "books" will appropriately contain more drawing than writing.
8. Peer editing is a good pre-final draft activity. Ask the kids to read aloud their stories to a buddy to catch errors or revision needs.
9. When the stories are complete, ask the kids to get into small groups (or you select groups.) and read the stories to each other.
10. Next, ask for volunteers to read to the whole group. This could be a rug activity. Be sure to keep the stories in the classroom to add to your library.

Variations/Extensions: Arrange for students to read their stories to other classes.

Further exploration: Take this story mapping tool to other areas of your curriculum. A new chapter for *Little House on the Prairie*? A new *Arthur* story?



Toucan-Fusion

Animalia's toucans have the job of talking telegrams. But sometimes....let's just say they can get a little confused.

Focus: Language order, clarity in communication

Materials Needed: chalkboard, flip chart or whiteboard

Those Toucans, however cute they are, sure have trouble lining up a message correctly. And sometimes both kids and adults have the same problem. How often have we ended up at the right place and the wrong time (or vice versa)? Messages misunderstood, information lost, meaning muddled. Let's teach the Toucans how to do it!

What to do and how:

1. Put up some of these mixed up messages on the board. (This activity is somewhat like Daily Oral Language, where students correct the spelling, grammar, usage and punctuation errors in a piece of short text -- but more fun.)

Iggy nose a blob mayonnaise had of on his.

When sings Allegra loudly curl leaves.

Bananas slip G'Bubu tree house stairs along.

Why Livingstone is researching the archives ancient, found portal only through?

Because Tyrannicus not planning is scheme another?

A librarian is Reenie and very at that dedicated.

Babies so cute are and no exception is Echo.

Mice media so small seem.

2. Have kids rearrange each phrase into logical order.

3. And now, have the kids make up their own confused sentences! Tell kids it is easier to make up sensible sentences first and scramble them second! See if they can come up with sentences that can be unscramble two or more ways.

Variations/Extensions: Make a class book of the best or favorite mixed-up messages.

Further explorations: Study telegrams and the history of this way of communicating.



Heard it on the Grapevine

Animalian communication relies on the Grapevine, their unique jungle phone system.

Focus: Active listening

Materials needed: just some kids

We've all played this ever entertaining game, first on the playground and later at silly grown-up parties. In America we call it "Telephone" or "Operator." In China, the game is called "Chinese Whispers," and in Germany, "Silent Mail." Other names over the world are "The Whispering Game," "Broken Telephone," and "False Rumors."

The goal of the game is to accurately pass a message from the sender to the last receiver. Has this EVER happened successfully? Invariably, miscommunication ensues and laughter prevails.

What to do and how:

1. Have the kids sit in a circle, usually on the floor.
2. For the first round, the teacher or parent whispers a message to the person sitting next to her.
3. The message is whispered from person to person.
4. The last person says the message out loud. Big laughing.
5. You then ask your students what they heard, and you can usually figure where the big breakdowns occurred. You may take notes on the board of what the students heard, if you choose.
6. Discuss with your students the importance of listening carefully. Extrapolate to other examples in life, say, taking telephone messages, listening to directions, being involved productively in conversation, even listening to TV.

Variations/Extensions: If your students speak or are studying another language, you can play Telephone in that language. What does this show us about the challenges of communication across cultures?

Further Explorations: Look online for other fun language/listening games.



So Convince Me!

Our conniving friend Tyrannicus is quite a speechmaker. He continually tries to convince Animalians of his credentials to replace Livingstone as leader -- but Animalians are only persuaded in the short term.

Focus: Language, writing, speaking

Materials needed: Copies of “Tribute to the Dog” by George Graham Vest (or another great persuasive speech) downloaded from the web.

When kids want something, boy, do they pull out all the stops! Let’s find a way to take that talent and turn it into a persuasive speech. A great website for persuasive speeches is: <http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/vest.htm>
There you’ll find the speech by George Graham Vest.

What to do and how:

1. Read aloud Vest’s speech, “Tribute to a Dog.” Ask kids to listen closely, and then make a list of points in the speech that won the case. (This may take a second reading, silently.)
2. Brainstorm with the kids what issues they really care about. What would they like to convince people of or make them do differently? These can be school related, home, neighborhood or world wide concerns. A kid could write a speech about why his baby brother should go to bed earlier. Encourage them not to be too broad. Say, a kid is worried about poverty. Too broad. How about health insurance for kids, or feeding hungry people.
3. Put the kids in pairs, and have them help each other narrow their topics and come up with their arguments and supports. They should take notes of their conversation.
4. At this point, you and the kids might want to develop a rubric to score their success in writing and delivering their speech.
5. Speeches should have at least two supports; for the older kids, three or more. Vest’s sample speech has three paragraphs, which is a good goal. For the little ones, a few lines or a paragraph will be great.
6. Conferring with each other will help as the writing process continues.
7. As these are relatively short speeches, two 30-minute blocks or so should be enough in class time for kids to create their speeches.
8. Solicit peer editing on the last draft, then have kids practice giving speeches aloud.

9. Over several days, the kids should give their speeches to the whole class.
You or the kids can use the rubric you created in step 4 to rate the speakers.

Variations/Extensions: A natural next step would be to develop a debate activity that includes both planned elements and in-character responses to questions.

Further explorations: Other speeches for older kids are available on The History Place (link above.) Children will also enjoy watching “The Trial of Old Drum,” a film that depicts George Graham Vest’s famous speech.



Books on Tape

Animalians love to listen to stories and even have periodic storytelling contests.

Focus: reading, listening

Materials needed: home or school library, tape recorder or computer

A great way to extend your classroom library is to include books on tape. A fun and inexpensive way to do this is to have your kids read books to a tape recorder or computer, so that they can be shared with the class. These recorded books can become a very valuable classroom resource, particularly for children who need auditory support for their reading comprehension. And for families, what could make a sweeter gift for Grandma or Grandpa than a grandchild-recorded book?

What to do and how:

1. Have your kids visit their home or school library, to select a book they'd like to read and to tape. Obviously, it would be best to select books you don't already have on tape in your classroom.
2. Ask the students to read the book silently first, several times. They need to really "get inside" the story and the language.
3. Discuss the importance of fluency and expression. You should model an engaged and dramatic read-aloud to remind kids how effective narrators read with energy, voice modulation, and drama.
4. Next, ask the kids to record their stories. If the book is long, kids might buddy up to do their reading. You'll need to set up a fairly quiet "recording studio," and make sure kids know how to start, pause, and rewind, whether on a tape recorder or on the computer.
5. Once the children have completed their recordings, have a quiet time for kids to listen to each other's tapes, using headphones if possible. Listening to books on tape is already a recognized ingredient of a good reading workshop – now, you have expanded the collection of choices.

6. Create a space for your audio library so that kids know how the availability and accessibility of this new resource.

Variations/Extensions: Listen to tapes with your parents on car trips.

Further Explorations: Listen to authors read their own books on tape, e.g. Charlotte's Web read by E.B. White.



Become a Specialist

*Everyone in Animalia – well, almost everyone – is hungry for knowledge!
The “stinkbugs” (kids) and animals alike read, write, and share their learning.*

Focus: Investigation and research

Materials Needed: books about jungle animals, internet resources, possible zoo visit or virtual zoo, poster board, markers, glue. Part of this mini-unit might require use of your computer lab at school.

There probably isn't a kid around who doesn't enjoy animals. Live animals, stuffed animals, animals in movies and books. Here's a way to encourage that interest, beginning with the wonderful jungle animals featured in the Animalia series.

What to do and how:

1. Have your copy of Animalia at the ready. Gather kids to the rug and review the characters in Animalia. What types of animals are there?
2. Next, ask each kid to pick their favorite jungle animal. If there are too many iguanas or tigers, you might prefer they have a second choice. They should then divide, with your help, into groups or 3-5 based their animal choice. You'll probably have a lion group, a tiger group, etc.
3. Model your own investigation of a non-jungle animal (so you don't “use up” a good jungle animal the kids might want to learn about). So, maybe a panda bear, a coyote, or a bat. Take out a relevant book and read aloud a page or two. Show kids your thinking by writing down facts you are learning on the board.
4. If you have a computer in your room, next model how to visit one of the many excellent virtual zoos. Many animal parks have full-time webcams pointed at fascinating animals, and you can peek right into their pens, all day, all around the world. Good links are:
<http://www.torontozoo.com/Animals/> or
<http://www.lpzoo.org/animals/index.html>.
5. Now that you have showed some different research strategies, it is time for kids to investigate their chosen critter. In their groups, they should read and talk about the books covering their jungle animal, and also make a virtual

- visit to a zoo. Give kids note cards for them to write facts they find about their animals.
6. Ask your groups to share their findings with each other. They should make a group list of the facts they discovered, leaving out repeats.
 7. Each kid should then, on a separate of drawing paper, draw their animal in a jungle setting. So each group will have 3-5 pictures of the same animal.
 8. Now, hand out the poster board and have the kids write the facts in the middle, then attaching their drawings to the top and bottom of the poster board. The size of the drawings and poster board depend on availability.
 9. Share time: Each group should stand up and present their poster, sharing the fact reading and drawing discussion.

Variations/Extensions: Involve your art teacher if you can. H/she might have other ideas for representations of the chosen animals...3-D?

Further explorations: Study other animals than the ones in Animalia.



Kids Want to Know

Throughout the series, Zoe and Alex face problems that require them to become researchers – gathering information, sifting facts, drawing inferences and reaching solid conclusions.

Focus: Learning and using the research process

Materials needed: a variety of nonfiction books and magazines

One of the greatest things about lower elementary kids is their curiosity. Help them burn with inquisitiveness as they turn their heads to research.

What to do and how:

1. Everyone is curious about something! Help kids identify a subject they would like to dig into deeply, using all the tools that real researchers use. Popular topics among kids have been ones like:

- * Consumer product comparisons: which brand of crayons work best?
- * Local history: who lived in this place before us, and how did they live?
- * Social action: Can we get the city to install a stoplight at the school crossing?

2. Explain that researchers have several ways of finding out information.

Reading: A great place to start any investigation is to read up on it, in books, in the newspaper, or on the web

Interviewing people: Smart researchers talk to people to get information. It's important to have a list of questions ready in advance so you don't forget anything – and so you can ask the same questions of many people.

Making observations: There's no substitute for direct experience in your topic. It's very important to look and see firsthand, to listen and hear, to make sense of what is going on – all the while writing and drawing your learning.

Making surveys or questionnaires: When you want to know what a lot of people know or think about a topic, you can design a paper survey which people can complete, and you can then add up all the answers.

3. Assemble the materials, provide the time, and offer the support kids need to pursue their chosen projects. Here is an example:

One day some second graders in suburban Chicago were looking out the classroom window when the garbage truck pulled up, loaded up with trash and then headed off to points unknown. The kids asked their teacher: “Where does the garbage go?” This was the start of a two-week research project during which kids studied all about the issues of community garbage removal, alternative treatment (burning, burial), and the people who do this important work. The unit culminated in a field trip: kids loaded into a school bus and followed the garbage truck on its rounds, all the way to a landfill, where they watched the unloading, interviewed workers about the process, and drew and wrote what they had learned.

4. Share the learning. Researchers usually make a report so that everyone else can benefit from their findings. This can be a speech, an article or a poster – or it can mean taking action by writing a letter or attending a meeting.



It's All in the Family

In the Animalia series, we learn of Livingstone's ancestry, G'bubu's gorilla forbears, and Ignatius D' Iguana's unique reptilian heritage.

Focus: Gathering regional family history information, interviewing skills, evidence collection.

Materials Needed: world globe or map, pushpins, yarn, internet access, chalkboard, 3x5 cards

It's the rage! We're all looking into our family history to see who rode the Mayflower or who had slaves in the family or who is related to African royalty. Folks are having their DNA tested to see their ethnic history or history of disease. Is this too much information? Maybe, but one thing we all have in common is our families, blended, traditional, adoptive, chosen, but we all have them, like it or not. So how about a look at our children's family history.

What to do and How:

1. Introduce your class to a world globe or world map. Tell them that each person in the room has family from around the U.S. or from different parts of the world.
Brainstorm ideas of the different ways students can find where their family members came from. Typically the list will include: asking parents or grandparents, searching the internet, talking to extended relatives, or friends of the family, looking at church registries, old bibles or scrapbooks, photos, or other documents.
2. The teacher can record these on a chart or type them up for the kids.
3. Most kids will realize that the fastest way to find out the geographical origins of their families will be to ask their parents.
4. Homework time! Find out where your mother's and father's (or other caretakers') families come from, for as far back as you can determine?
5. Interview questions: What was their location of origin? How do your parents know? What evidence is there to prove this information? Put questions and answers on a 3x5 card.
6. Have pushpins available and when the kids bring back the card with their information, have them push a pin into that spot on the map or globe. After

- each kid has done so, the teacher will connect them all with yarn back to the spot on the map where their school is located.
7. Whole class discussion should follow regarding aspects of heritage, language, food, and other cultural differences.

Variations/Extensions: Go online to genealogy websites. Your students could learn to develop their own family trees.

Further Explorations: Study the family trees of famous people, probably historic figures.



Animal Observation Stations

In Animalia, there are all kinds of natural and sometime supernatural phenomena which Zoe and Alex must investigate – and they use a thoughtful, scientific approach to unravel questions and mysteries.

Focus: Making and documenting careful observations

Materials Needed: One or more regularly accessible pet animal (rabbit, fish, dog, ant colony, etc). You will need to provide paper and pens for observation journals.

These days, kids don't just learn science—they do science. What a far cry from the moldy old textbooks we had in earlier days. The classroom or home can provide comfy space for experiments and observation logs. Keep it fun!

What to do and how:

1. Begin by telling kids that they are going to look like scientists at something they have been seeing everyday -- a classroom or family pet. Explain that scientists who study animal behavior have to watch creatures very carefully and regularly, and that they need to make detailed records of what they observe.
2. Help kids to set up an Animal Observation Log. Ask them what behaviors they might be see in their particular pet -- and make the log based upon those attributes. Depending on the animal, this might include eating behavior and quantity, movement, sleeping habits, color changes, relations with other animals or children, responses to noise or light, etc.
3. First, take initial measurements: have kids measure and weigh the animal if possible and record in their observation log.
4. Now, have kids take spend a set period of time for five to ten days in a row, watching and recording the behavior of the animal, capturing data in their logs. (you might need less time for more sedentary critters).
5. While the observations continue, have kids find library books or web resources about the animal they are studying. Compare their own pet to the book's information: how does this animal fit into the standard description as far as size, features, coloring, and behavior?

Variation: You can apply the same procedures to setting up a weather station, where kids use a self-created chart, their own senses, and a few simple tools (thermometer, etc) to make regular and systematic observations of the outside weather.



Rhyme Time

Animalians love to play with language, in their songs and poems; sometimes they even get frozen in rhyme-time!

Focus: language study, listening, writing

Materials needed: Beach ball, self-made book, markers:

What to do and how:

1. Select your favorite rhyming book. A few possibilities are: *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See*, by Bill Martin Jr., *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, also by Martin, *Those Can-Do Pigs* by David M. McPhail. Read the book aloud to the kids.
2. Next, go back and identify the rhyming words. Brainstorm with the kids other words that rhyme. Write these on the board.
3. Bring out the beach ball with words selected by you written on it. Say, see, flew, catch—words that have plenty of potential rhymes. Ask one student to pick a word from the ball, then come up with a word that rhymes with it. Next, toss the ball around the room until each has had a chance to rhyme.
4. Ask the kids to make a small *Book of Rhymes*. (Just fold and staple plain paper.) When finished, ask each kid to write rhymes h/she remembers from the game, the book, or words on the book.
5. Add new rhymes written by the children. Decorate the cover as desired.
6. Have the students refer to their *Book of Rhymes* when writing poetry, songs, etc. Kids should add in new rhymes whenever they notice them.

Variations/Extensions: There are lots of kinds of rhyming poems, including rap. Explore more.

Further explorations: Play the rhyming song “Banana, banana, fo fana...” There are many other such tunes. Consult with your music teacher.



Jimbo, Jambo, Jiggle

Animalians love to have fun with words, and Iggy is the King of language play.

Focus: alliteration

Materials needed: just your brain

Who doesn't love alliteration? Where would Edgar Allen Poe be today if there weren't such a thing as alliteration? "While I nodded, nearly napping.." from "The Raven". And who knew that President Thomas Jefferson was also a big fan of alliteration? Pre-TV and computers, people gathered together to play games in the evening, often word games. Jefferson made up this simple game we still can enjoy today. And, every page of Graeme Base's *Animalia* contains a clever alliterative sentence, each one tied to a letter of the alphabet.

What to do and how:

1 Explain to kids what alliteration is, and you can certainly read "The Raven" to your older kids, or find a poem or book from this website for the younger ones.

2. Play the Game: The basic structure of this game is to complete this sentence, using alliteration: "I took my friend to _____, with a _____, and _____"

Example: "I took my friend to **Seattle** with a **snail** and **sweated**."

3. Here is a handy chart:

Letter	I took my friend to....	with a (an).....	and.....
a			
b			
c			
d			
e			
f			
g			
h			
i			

j			
k			
l			
m			
n			
o			
p			
q			
r			
s			
t			
u			
v			
w			
x			
y			
z			

4. Play the game whenever you have a transition or a bit of free time.

Variations/Extensions: A natural extension of this game would be to write poetry with alliteration.

Further exploration: What other games did people play that involved language earlier, and what games do people play still? “Pictionary” is one.



Word Wall

Animalia is rich in language. There's Livingstone's love of language, Tyrannicus' manipulation of it, and the whole community's joy in communication.

Focus: vocabulary

Materials needed: Big wall space and “wall” material that takes staples and pins, colored paper, markers

What to do and how:

Words flood Animalia. Some are sophisticated words like “haberdasher” and others are made-up, like Allegra’s “Bang-a-lang.” Our goal is to help our students expand their vocabulary by, with you, creating a word wall in the classroom. The words that go on the wall can be commonly misspelled, or important to a class unit, or process words like “consensus” or “collaborate” or words that are just fun or curious. This wall develops throughout the year. A word tree is a good idea, too. Each word has a leaf.

1. First, find a place for your wall. Ideal is 6’x8’, but use whatever space you have. Another idea is to have several smaller word walls for particular curriculum or class process projects. A science wall? These would require smaller poster board.
2. Cut pieces of colored paper the size of words, some shorter, some longer. Have these handy for whenever a new word comes up.
3. The first words to go on the wall might be all the students’ names. It’s good for them to know how to spell each other’s names and implies that this is their wall.
4. It’s generally suggested that five words go up a week, not too many at a time.
5. Encourage the kids to refer to the Word Wall when writing or discussing, and do so yourself. Perhaps clap each time a new word goes up, or chant the word.
6. Enjoy your wall and don’t forget to put up words from Animalia!

Variations/Extension: Have kids keep their own word wall at home.

A word tree is a good idea, too, with a new leaf for each word.

Further explorations: Ask your kids to keep their own dictionary of words in their desks, for reference.



Bang-a-lang Slang

Allegra is our swamp slang queen. She can dish made-up bon mots like nobody's business!

Focus: vocabulary, language

Materials Needed: poster board for word wall

Bees knees, the bomb, cracker jack, swell, fab, rockin', the tops, cool, bad, sweet, slammin'. We all have fun with word play, and what's more fun than slang? Kids come home from school with new slang words practically daily, and their slang vocabulary will change over the years. Let's see it in a positive light.

What to do and how:

1. With your kids, help define "slang." Is it ok to use slang? When and where? (We think it's very OK and creative to use slang, but maybe don't call Grandma "home skillet." Check this link for a good definition of slang: <http://www.slangsite.com/slang/G.html>. Do not share this link with your students.
2. Brainstorm with the kids some of the slang they remember from Animalia. Then, brainstorm common slang they use every day. Categories might help, say slang for friends, something good, bad, happy, sad, confused, angry, disgusted. Slang revolving around particular things like computers, shoes, food, clothes, cell phones, etc. Also, there's slang in certain jobs or areas of thought, i.e. cowboying, skateboarding, "surfing the Internet." Firemen, bankers, ditch diggers---everyone has their slang. Slang varies in different geographic areas of the US and different countries around the world. Keep track of the list on chart paper.
3. Now the extra fun part. Have the kids pick feelings, things, specific area slang (skiing) and make up new slang words. A slang words for happy are: jazzed, stoked, pumped, flying high, copasetic, tip-top, fab, etc. Can you think of a new word for "happy?" How about "boppin?"
4. Divide the kids into small groups and ask them to come up with new slang words. Make a slang word wall to display in the room and go over it with the kids.

Variations/Extensions: Have kids talk to their parents and grandparents about what slang they grew up with.

Further Explorations: Look on the web for slang from other languages.



Me and the Media

Just like us, Animalians have a mixed relationship with the media – they sometimes watch too much Fluttervision or fall victim to unscrupulous media moguls like Tyrannicus and T.C. (The Creeper).

Focus: self awareness of media use

Materials Needed: paper and pencil to record findings

Media literacy is critical to children’s education. Just think how inundated we oldsters are with TV, cell phones, text messages, emails, websites and movies. For the kids, things are even more intense (throw in video games, social networking, music “borrowing,” etc). These forms of “new literacy” promise to grow exponentially through our children’s lives. So we adults must ensure that young people will be critical and responsible consumers and producers of digital realities.

What to do and how:

1. Keep a week-long record of all media use, including watching TV, playing video games, computer surfing, going to movies – and, for older kids, cell phone talking or “texting”. Be sure to include **reading** as one of the “media.”
2. Help kids create an age-appropriate chart on which to log their media use.

THE MEDIA AND ME CHART

	Media TV/Computer/Book	Time	Program/ Game	What I Learned
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				

Saturday

Sunday

3. After a full week has been documented, have kids total up all columns to determine the number of hours and minutes doing each kind of activity.
4. Next, ask kids to calculate the number of hours spent on non-media activities -- sleeping, playing, and going to school (be aware that there may be much “screen time” in school too, so subtract that). You can add additional columns to the chart to record this information.
5. Have kids talk about how they divide their time. What media activities seem valuable, fun and educational? What are some things they might like to change? Talk about the comparison between book time and screen time. What might make books more attractive?



Buy It Now

*Tyrannicus is always trying to sell one thing or another, a rescue operation where he devises the traps, or a security service, to protect people from **him**, the cad.*

Focus: Critical thinking, reading, writing

Materials Needed: TV video camera if available, tape recorder, art supplies as needed

Every parent is plagued by their kids asking for sugary and fatty foods advertised on TV. Who hasn't succumbed to buying Little Mary's, Frosted Frosteos, Chips a Bunch, et al? Or juices that aren't juices, pops that are green? Awareness of the manipulation in advertising is important to our children; just as it is to adults. This activity will help increase awareness and be fun along the way.

What to do and how:

1. Everyone loves a good jingle. Jingles are a catchy, memorable, often musical type of advertising. Brainstorm advertising jingles for foods or drinks that your kids know from the radio or TV. You'll want to provide them with examples such as: "I wish I were an Oscar Meyer" "Mmm..Mmm good."
2. With the kids, puzzle what these ads are actually selling. Fun? Prestige? Attractiveness? Friendship? Are they telling the truth or offering opinion? The Oscar Meyer bologna ad sells friendship, bologna, innocence, safety, etc. What about Coke ads?
3. Ask the students to think of their favorite food, as in potato chips (not Pringles) or cola (not Coke) or steak (not Kansas City steak.) Their assignment is to create an advertisement for their food, making up a new brand name. This can involve a jingle, representational character (Tony the Tiger), mini-skit or other approaches that your kids discover. In order to prepare for their advertisement, kids should take notes while watching how food is advertised. Cartoons? Skits? Songs? (This activity can be done individually or pairs.)
4. After the kids collect their information, they should write the script for their ad. The goal would be for each group or individual to videotape, audiotape or make a visual for their food to be shared with the larger group. The presenters should point out what else their advertisement is selling than the food itself. Comfort? Good digestion? Success?

Variations/Extensions: The kids would enjoy seeing old ad campaigns and hearing classic jingles, etc.

Further explorations: Have kids talk to their parents about ads they remember from their youth.



Just the Facts

Hearsay runs rampant in Animalia. Tyrannicus nearly takes charge many times by willfully spreading untrue information.

Focus: Questioning, fact vs. opinion, interviewing, writing, reading

Materials needed: “5 W’s sheet,” *Time for Kids* or similar magazine (articles from the internet can also be excellent.)

http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/class/pdfs/2007S/go/ns2004_21_go.pdf

Animalia is such a wonderfully literate world. The library is the center of everything. Investigation and reporting are essential parts of the show. But miscommunication sometimes interrupts the tide of happy life there. The problem often arises when someone lets the truth get mixed up with fiction or opinion.

Let’s help our kids learn to be effective communicators by teaching them how to read and write a factual, unbiased news article.

1. Pick a news article for the whole class to read (from Time for Kids or another source.) Read and talk through the article with kids and look for differences between fact and opinion.
2. Hand out the 5 W’s sheet and ask the kids to fill in the five balloons for the article you just read together.
3. Next, ask the kids to brainstorm ideas for their own news piece. School news, neighborhood news, family news – all are welcome.
4. Offer suggestions about what questions to ask to get the true story. (Stay away from questions like: “Did she look upset as she walked the stairs?”)
5. Hand students another “5 W’s” sheet to take with them when reporting.
6. Have students tell their news story to a partner. Help each other check for the 5 W’s and factual content.
7. Draft written versions of news stories. Revise and edit one last time.
8. Final copy to be shared with the class in groups or over several days with the whole group.

Variations/Extensions: If computers are available, you can put together an actual, printable newspaper. This would require teacher and perhaps lab time. For parents, a family or neighborhood news article (or a whole newsletter) makes a great at-home reading-writing project, with a real audience right at hand, which can motivate young reporters.

Further explorations: Develop student teams to put together a more diversified newspaper, with a sports section, movie reviews, etc. If it is possible to “publish” this on some kind of web space, which could help kids feel truly “published.”

About the educational consultants:

Throughout her career, **Elaine Daniels** has been a language arts classroom teacher and teacher educator. She's at home in elementary classrooms, working with pre-service students, and teaching Children's Literature and Language Arts Methods at University of New Mexico. Her work with "Animalia" has been her most recent and joyous experience.

Harvey "Smokey" Daniels has been a city and suburban teacher, a professor of teacher education, and the author of 13 books on language, learning and literacy. His book *Best Practice: Today's Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools* (Heinemann, 2005), is widely considered the benchmark for progressive teaching and learning.