



# Science and Visual Art

## Creature Idea Generator

K- Third Grade

Lesson by Kari Christensen

This lesson may be adjusted to fit whatever timeline you need. It can be the focus for one day, or worked on for an hour a day over a week or more.

### Objectives

- Create unique fantasy creatures using a combination of suggestions pulled at random.
- Discuss how an animals' features determine what type of environment they live in.
- Understand the needs of animals in order to survive in their environment.

### Introduction

This activity will combine students' imaginations with their knowledge of animals and their environments. You will prepare by writing the names of a variety of animals on slips of paper that will be randomly chosen by the students later on. You will also write a variety of habitats on slips of paper that will be drawn separate from the animals.

Have a discussion with students about the relationship between an animal and the environment it lives in. What does a desert animal need in order to survive in the desert? A forest animal? What about a domestic animal, like your pets at home? Talk with students about how the appearance of an animal plays a role in how they survive in their environment. Discuss how animals such as zebras with a distinct pattern in their fur can use their patterns to thwart predators.

### Learning Activity

Tell students that they will be creating their own fantasy creatures based on the characteristics of real animals. Explain that they will be choosing two slips of paper, one with an animal name and the other with a habitat. Students will then use their imaginations to create their own animal that uses one feature from the animal they have chosen. Their animal must also have the ability to survive in whatever habitat they chose. For example: if I chose a pufferfish and the rain forest I might create an exotic bird that can puff up to a larger size and scare away predators.

After each student has chosen an animal and a habitat have them get together in small groups to talk about what they selected, and get ideas of what their animal might look like. Students should talk with each other about their habitats and what an animal would need to live in that environment.



James Christensen, *Fantasies of the Sea*, 1985, acrylic on board

### Materials

- Paper
- Water color paints
- Colored Pencils

### Image from the Museum

- James Christensen, *Fantasies of the Sea*, 1985, acrylic on board

### Image from the *Magic and Machine* Exhibition

- Kari Christensen, *Night Demon*, 2016, acrylic and mixed media on canvas
- Kari Christensen, *Baba Yaga*, 2016, acrylic and mixed media on canvas

### Utah Core Standards

#### Science Standard 4

##### Objective 1

Tell how external features affect an animals' ability to survive in its environment.

- a. Compare and contrast the characteristics of living things in different habitats.

##### Objective 2

Identify basic needs of living things (plants and animals) and their abilities to meet their needs.

- a. Communicate and justify how the physical characteristics of living things help them meet their basic needs.

#### Visual Arts:

##### Strand: CREATE (3.V.CR.)

Students will generate artistic work by conceptualizing, organizing, and completing their artistic ideas. They will refine original work through persistence, reflection, and evaluation (Standards 3.V.CR.1–5).

##### Strand: CONNECT (3.V.CO.)

Students will relate artistic skills, ideas and work with personal meaning and external context (Standards 3.V.CO.1–2).



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Now that the students have had the opportunity to discuss their animals and habitats with their classmates, give them time to brainstorm what their animal will look like. They may want to create simple sketches or write a brief description of the animal they are going to make. Their fantasy animals may have patterns on their fur or feathers, they might have an extra long beak, they could be covered in many bright colors, have long fins or whatever the students come up with! The important thing to remember is that their animal must be able to survive in whatever habitat they chose. Give students the task of coming up with a name for their animal to go along with their project.

Students will now have the opportunity to create a water color painting of their animal. Give each student a set of water colors, some colored pencils and paper. Encourage them to use the colored pencils to outline their animals before beginning with the water colors. Once their fantasy creature is complete, have students write the name of their animal on the top of their paper.

## Conclusion

Give students the opportunity to hang their finished piece somewhere in the classroom. Have the students

look at what their classmates have created, and point out the unique characteristics they gave to their animals. Invite each student to share what habitat their animal lives in, and what characteristics they have that enable them to survive in that environment. Encourage students to look around for different animals when they are walking home from school or going to a park, and think about how that animal survives in its environment.

## Extensions

This lesson may be extended to cover multiple days, or be completed in one. One possible extension would be to incorporate a Language Arts component. Students can write a story about their fantasy characters and include a description of where they live and what other animals live there with them. They may also be required to include a conflict where their animal must use their unique features in order to survive.



Kari Christensen, *Night Demon*, 2016, acrylic and mixed media on canvas



Kari Christensen, *Baba Yaga*, 2016, acrylic and mixed media on canvas



James Christensen, *Fantasies of the Sea*, 1985, acrylic on board