

See and Tell

TIME

Preparation: 15 minutes Activity: 30 minutes

SETTING

Classroom

Objectives

In this activity, students will:

1. practice observation.
2. learn to recognize different types of birds (or other animals).

Inquiry

This activity will engage students in these parts of the inquiry process:

- ❖ Observation. (“Notice and wonder.”)

See [Introduction to Inquiry](#) for an explanation of these terms.

Introduction

This activity is a great preparation for birdwatching or nature walks. Students will learn to recognize and name birds that they might see in their area. They will also build observation skills and develop a habit of looking closely at the living things they encounter.

The lesson plan is written with a focus on birds, but can be used with any type of animal or even plants, depending on what you are studying.

Materials

photographs of different types of birds (especially those commonly found in the area where you live)

Activity

Preparation

1. Choose pictures to use for this activity.
2. Spend a little time looking at the pictures and noticing some details.
3. Students will be looking at the pictures, then trying to answer questions about what they saw. Brainstorm some questions that you could ask them. Focus on things like colors, shapes, patterns, and setting.

Introduction

1. Tell students that when we look at pictures or objects that don't move, we are able to spend as much time as we want to notice all the details. However, when we look at living animals, we don't always get that chance—the animal might move away before we are finished looking.
2. Explain that we are going to practice noticing things quickly and remembering what we notice. This will help us prepare for looking at living animals.

3. Tell students they will get one minute to look at each picture. During that time, they should notice everything that they can about the animal. For example, notice what color it is, what shape it is, what its feet look like, what its head looks like, and anything else that they see. (It is up to you whether to have your students observe silently or have them call out all the things they notice.)
4. Explain that after they are done noticing, you will put the picture away and see how much they remember.

Exploration

1. Hold up the first photograph. Tell students the name of the animal and give them 60 seconds to stare at it and notice things (either silently or out loud).
2. When the time is up, place the photo face down (so students can no longer see it).
3. Now quiz students by asking them questions about the animal. As you ask questions, use the name of the animal as much as possible. For example, if the picture was of a robin, you could ask things like:
 - What color is the robin's belly?
 - What color is the robin's back?
 - What is the robin's beak shaped like?
 - What do the robin's feet look like?
 - What is the robin doing in the picture?

Ask any questions that you think of. Start with easy ones. As students get the hang of the activity, you can start asking harder questions.

4. If the students don't know the answer to one of the questions, don't tell them! Say that they will have to notice that next time.
5. After you have asked several questions, tell them they will get another minute to look at the picture again. They should try to notice any details that they missed the first time.
6. Hold up the same picture for another 60 seconds.
7. When the time is up, place the photo face down again. Ask the students a few more questions about the animal, including any that they got wrong the first time.
8. Repeat the process with different photos. Once students get the hang of it, they will begin to notice more and more details. After a while, start to have the students ask each other questions (instead of just responding to your questions).
9. Throughout the activity, emphasize the names of the animals to help your students connect the images to the name. This will help them recognize the animals if they see them in other settings.
10. After the activity, you can hang the pictures up somewhere in the classroom, and add more pictures as you continue exploring different types of animals.

Reflection

After the activity, ask students which of the pictures they like the best. Have each student share about their favorite picture and explain what they liked about it. Ask them to describe the most interesting thing they noticed in the picture. If you are using journals, record the reflections there.

Next Steps

- ❖ Use this activity before a nature walk or backyard exploration to prepare your students to recognize some of the animals that they might see. Check out some birdwatching tips here:
<http://www.calacademy.org/teachers/upload/docs/BirdwatchingBasics.pdf>
- ❖ You can also apply the “see and tell” skill to actual living things (instead of photos of living things). Whenever you see an animal during outdoor activities, have your students look at it until it moves away (which could be a very short period of time for fast-moving critters!). Then ask students to tell you about what it looked like.

Preschool Learning Foundations

- ❖ Identify characteristics of a variety of plants and animals, including their appearances (insides and outsides) and behaviors, and begin to categorize them.
- ❖ Observe objects and events in their environment, and describe their observations.

For more science activity ideas, see [Three Ideas For Preschool](#).