

Potato Fish Adaptations

from the Texas Memorial Museum

Introduction

In this activity, students will create their own imaginary fish using arts and crafts materials. Students will focus upon their knowledge of adaptations that help fish to survive. Such adaptations might include a large fin for fast swimming, or a false eye spots for deceiving predators. The students will present their fish to other students, explaining what each of the adaptations do. This activity could be used as a group activity, or students may create their own, individual fish.

Objective

Students will analyze the adaptations of animals for survival by creating a 3-D model of an imaginary fish.

Materials

- Potato (or Styrofoam balls)
- Low-temperature glue gun
- Push pins or toothpicks
- A variety of arts and crafts materials (such as colored paper, feathers, sequins, etc.)

Instructions

1. Brainstorm with your students on the topic of fish adaptations:
 - a. What kinds of adaptations do fish have? (Camouflage, gills, fins, specialized teeth, scales, etc.)
 - b. What are some of the features of a fish's environment that might induce adaptations in a species? (Salinity of the water, predators such as other fish or people, temperature, water flow and currents, oxygen levels, the color of rocks and other features, levels of sunlight, etc.)
 - c. What are some imaginary adaptations that might benefit a fish? (Wings, hair, voice, robotic body parts, etc.)
2. Have students draw a thumbnail sketch of their fish first. This ensures conservation of materials, and it will give them an opportunity to think about and perfect their design before they begin construction. The thumbnail should include at least 3 adaptations that they will include, with a short description of each of the adaptations.
3. Gather materials and distribute them to your students.
4. Have students build their fish.
5. Have students present their fish to the other students.

Teaching Strategies/Extensions

- You may wish to create a hallway or classroom exhibit of your students fish.
- You may wish to have a "beauty contest" of the fish.
- Students may wish to create other organisms that would live in the same ecosystem as their new fish. For instance, if their fish had sharp teeth, the students could create an insect that has especially thick armor to protect it from this fish.
- As a writing extension, have students write a narrative or a descriptive composition that focuses on their fish.

This activity was originally created by teacher Sally Vidal for the UT Museums Summer Institute, a professional development offering from AISD during the summer 1999.