

SNACKS & SLEUTHING

Animal Fact Check Lesson Plan

Description

This activity is a low-stakes opportunity for learners to practice fact-checking and lateral reading skills. Learners select one animal fact 'mystery' and use a search engine to find at least one reputable source that answers the question or evaluates the claim. The overarching goal is to emphasize the power in pausing and looking outside of a given information source or piece of media in order to evaluate it. This activity has been used as a pop-up lesson during outreach tabling but can also be adapted for classroom instruction.

Learning Outcome(s)

- Apply lateral reading strategies in order to evaluate claims

Alignment to Virginia Tech Digital Literacy Framework

- Evaluation & Reflection

Estimated Time

2-4 minutes per interaction

What You'll Need

- A pre-curated set of 4-8 example animal 'mysteries' or questions (see Appendix A)
- A table and whiteboard or screen to display pre-curated examples (see Appendix B)
- Snacks or other giveaway incentives
- Recommended: a back-up tablet or laptop for participants to use to fact-check
- Recommended: handouts with further tips for fact-checking and evaluating information

What You'll Need

1. Greet potential participants and explain the goal of the activity: we're just practicing some easy fact-checking today.
2. Invite each learner to pick from the pre-curated set of animal facts/questions. Optional: prompt them to guess the answer first.
3. Ask the learner to use a search engine to find the answer from at least one reputable source, using either their own device or one provided.
4. When the learner comes back with an answer, ask them which source they found it in and if they trust that source. If they didn't notice the source, encourage them to look back again and find it. If they found the answer in the Google AI overview, encourage them to keep looking.
5. Offer a recap or takeaway: you can do the same thing any time you find something online that sparks questions or a big reaction for you. Open a new tab and search for more.
6. Encourage the learner to choose a snack and take a handout (if applicable).

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Appendix A

Curating the example set is usually the most time-consuming part of preparing this lesson. Feel free to draw from the examples below. Snopes and other fact-checking websites can be a great resource for finding more.

True Examples

- Is the 'happiest animal on earth' real?
- Do koalas have human-like fingerprints?
- Did a soccer player adopt a dog that interrupted match?
- Do giraffes have the same number of neck bones as humans?
- Is it true that hippos can't actually swim or float?
- Can hummingbirds fly backwards?

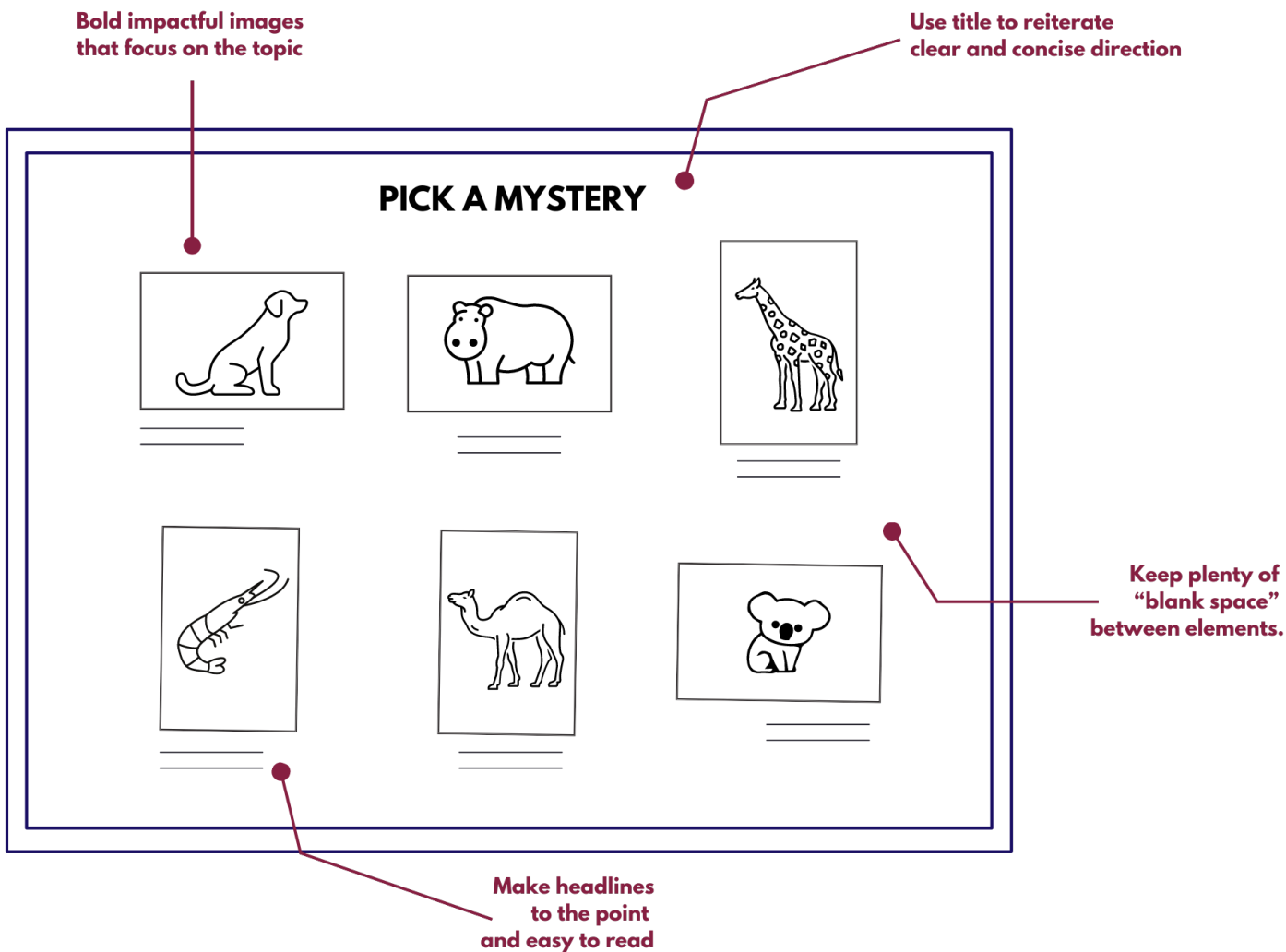
False Examples

- Do penguins fall over watching airplanes?
- Did an elephant carry a lion cub to safety?
- Is the pyjama bird a rare species?
- How much water can camels hold in their humps?
- Can shrimp see extra colors?
- Are teacup pigs a smaller breed of pig bred to be pets?

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Appendix B



Tips for Setting Up Display

- Use the title to reiterate clear and concise direction
- Include bold impactful images that focus on the topic
- Make headlines to the point and easy to read
- Keep plenty of "blank space" between element