

10-Minute Poetry Activities Across the Curriculum

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Name _____ Date _____

How Doth the Little Crocodile

How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in
With gently smiling jaws.

—Lewis Carroll



How Doth the Little Crocodile

Procedure

This is an easy poem to remember because of its rhyme scheme: *a-b-a-b*. If students have already learned “Father William,” they will look upon Lewis Carroll as an old friend. If your class has not already done so, add Carroll’s dates to the class time line and map.

Activity Sheet A provides a writing frame students can use to describe an imaginary encounter with a crocodile. Activity Sheet B presents some interesting facts about crocodiles and directs students to add more information to the list.

Interdisciplinary Activities

1. **Choice of words** In this poem, Lewis Carroll lulls the reader into a false sense of security by using such words as “shining tail,” “golden scale,” and “grin.” He gives no indication that this “little” poem is going to end in disaster for “little fishes.” Ask students to discuss the poet’s choice of word, in particular, the words “gently smiling jaws.” Compare the expression “crocodile tears,” with its implication of insincerity. Discuss the speaker’s, readers’, and crocodile’s own views of his meal. (Language Arts)
2. **Crocodile facts** Have students check the reliability of Carroll’s information on crocodiles, including such questions as whether there are golden crocodiles in the Nile and what these crocodiles eat. Students will be interested to discover that crocodiles live to be very old; in fact, one reportedly lived to be approximately 115 years old in a Russian zoo. Crocodiles are known for their speed, which can reach upwards of 30 miles an hour. They also have three different gaits, one of which resembles the manner in which dogs run. (Science, Language Arts, Research)
3. **Reptiles** Review the definition of a reptile, using the crocodile as an example. (Science)
4. **Alligators vs. crocodiles** Many people frequently confuse alligators and crocodiles. Ask students to research the similarities and differences between these two reptiles on the Internet. Encourage students to refer to a field guide on reptiles. (Science, Technology)
5. **Illustrating Lewis Carroll** Lewis Carroll wrote a number of poems featuring unlikely animals as characters. Among those your students might enjoy are “The Hunting of the Snark,” “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” “The Lobster Quadrille,” and “The Melancholy Pig.”
After reading a variety of Carroll’s poems, ask students to copy and illustrate a book of his poetry. (Language Arts, Art)

Name _____ Date _____

How Doth the Little Crocodile

Crocodiles are feared by many people. Why? What is there about animals like this that we humans find so frightening? On this activity page, write a letter to a friend describing your adventure with a crocodile. You may want to do a little research first, or you can just imagine the adventure. A writing frame is provided to get you started. Do not feel restricted by the frame; use what you like and discard the rest. When you have finished, add a title.

TITLE _____

My adventure began in _____ about _____ ago. I had been traveling through _____ when I suddenly heard _____ in the water near the path I was following. Immediately sensing _____, I moved away from _____ and looked _____ at _____.

Whatever it was, it was big. I would say it was about _____ feet long. The color is hard to describe but let's say it looked like _____. My friends had warned me that _____, so I was _____. I decided to investigate further by _____. Picking up a _____, I slowly approached the _____. As I looked down I saw _____. Suddenly I realized that _____. It didn't take me much time to _____. Whenever I tell anyone about _____, they always say, "_____."



Name _____ Date _____

How Doth the Little Crocodile: Fascinating Facts About Crocodiles

The following list has some interesting information about the crocodile. How many fascinating facts can you add to this list? Use the Internet and other research sources to find information.

1. Crocodiles have pointed snouts.
2. Crocodiles are reptiles, just like snakes.
3. Saltwater crocodiles can be as long as 19 feet.
4. A female crocodile can lay as many as 40 eggs at a time.
5. Mother crocodiles carry their young from land to water in their mouths.
6. Some of the crocodile's lower teeth show, even when its mouth is closed.
7. A crocodile's body is covered with large scales.
8. Crocodiles propel themselves through the water with their tails.
9. Crocodiles can remain submerged for up to two hours.
10. Crocodiles can have as many as 3,000 teeth during their lifetimes.
11. South Florida is the only place in the world where alligators and crocodiles can be found together.
12. A crocodile cannot chew its food.

Now it's your turn. What fascinating facts can you add to this list? Write your facts on the back of this sheet or on a separate piece of paper.

