



Snakes Alive

Language Arts / Science

Reading Level: ★★

Learning Objectives

- **Reading/Literary Analysis Strategy:** Students will summarize information from texts.
- **Writing/Presentation Strategy:** Students will give presentations to inform.
- **Connect to Science:** Students will identify differences in traits between humans and snakes.
- **Connect to Visual Arts:** Students will create realistic snake models from clay.

Before Reading (15 minutes)

Summary

Deadly reptiles? Slithering, slimy killers? Discover the real truth about snakes in this colorful book. What do snakes eat? Are all snakes poisonous? Why are so many people afraid of snakes? Find out the answers to these questions and much, much more when you read *Snakes Alive!*

Vocabulary

- **amphibian** (am FIB e en) a cold-blooded animal that can live in water or on land, but breeds in water; The science class was studying frogs and other amphibians.
- **evolve** (e VOLV) to develop gradually over thousands or millions of years; Scientists think that birds evolved from one group of dinosaurs.
- **extinction** (ex TINK shun) when a plant or animal species no longer exists; Many animals in the rain forest are near extinction.
- **molt** (molt) to shed old hair, skin, or feathers as new ones grow; Snakes cannot grow unless they molt their skin.

Parts of the Book

- Point out the table of contents, noting that the headings summarize the contents of each chapter. Ask students to browse through the book. Point out that each chapter heading is a question, which is answered in the text contained in that chapter.
- Using the index on the last page of the book, ask students to refer to the pages indexed for lungs and tell what interesting fact they learned about constrictors.



Pre-Reading Discussion (5 – 10 minutes)

Have a group discussion about snakes. Ask students:

- What do you know about snakes?
- Describe any snakes you have seen.
- What type of animal is a snake? (reptile)
- Why are most people afraid of snakes?
- What kinds of things do you think you will learn by reading this book?

Reading (Group or Silent)

- If doing timed silent reading, provide a comfortable environment for students to read their books. Walk around the room and chat with students about the information they discover while reading. Observe students' progress. Provide assistance to any students who may be struggling with unfamiliar words or with understanding portions of the book.
- When reading aloud (instructor or students), model think-aloud strategies. After reading a page or two of text, pause and ask “does this make sense?” “Can you say what the important points were in your own words?” If yes, continue to read. If no, go back to figure out where the problem is (vocabulary, concentration, meaning) and use an appropriate strategy to fix the problem.
- When reading interesting facts, captions or passages, pause to further explore by asking students related questions on the topic.
- Let students know that key vocabulary words are shown in bold throughout the book. They should refer to the glossary on page 31 to look up any words with which they are not familiar.

After Reading Activities

Reading Strategy: Summarizing (20 minutes)

- Have students choose one chapter to summarize verbally. Tell them they should be able to answer the question at the top of the page in their own words.
- Have each student select one species of snake they would like to learn more about (examples: boa constrictor, rattlesnake, viper, cobra, python, copperhead). Ask students to research the snake they choose using Grolier Online (follow path given below). Once they have collected their research, have them write a paragraph about the breed of snake they selected.



Follow this path to conduct research:

Go to: <http://goafterschool.grolier.com>.

Click on the **Grolier Online Kids** button under Look it Up.

In the Find it Fast box, type the name of the snake you would like to research and click on the **GO** button.

Click on any of the articles that are returned on the search results page

- Copy the **Snakes Alive Crossword Puzzle** reproducible so there is one for each student, and have students complete the puzzle. Students can refer to the book to locate answers. (An answer key is included in the instructor's manual.)

Connect to Science (30 minutes each)

- If online resources are available, have students visit the American Museum of Natural History's Web site "Lizards and Snakes Alive" by following the path below:

Go to: <http://goafterschool.grolier.com>.

Click on the **Science Explorations** button on the right.

Scroll over the lizard picture and click to open the **Lizard and Snakes** page.

Under the American Museum of Natural History heading, click on **Lizards and Snakes Alive**.

Click on the **GO** button when prompted.

Click on **Snakes** on the left column.

- Provide each student with a copy of the **Snake vs. Human Characteristics** reproducible. Working as a group and using the book for reference as necessary, guide students in a discussion about how snakes have much different characteristics than humans when comparing skin, smell, hearing, and winter activity. Have students complete the worksheet during the discussion.

Writing/Presentation Strategy (30 minutes)

- Have students create an informational poster about one of the snakes they found interesting. The poster should contain an illustration of the snake and should indicate as many creature features as possible.
- Provide students with clay and have them create a snake of their choice using pictures from the book to model from. Provide toothpicks to etch scales, diamonds, or other designs in the snakes skin. If possible, let dry until the next session and allow students to paint using tempera or acrylic paint. Provide an index card to each student and ask them to record the name of the snake and two characteristics about that species. When the snake sculptures are completed, have a mock museum showing.



Assessing the Learning Experience (10 minutes)

- Use the **Activity Assessment Grid** to record how well students presented their chapter summaries in addition to the research summary paragraph and snake posters.
- Review the completed crossword puzzle and check for completion and accuracy.
- **Assessment Questions**
What do you think people can do to make snakes less scary to people who are afraid of snakes?
Can you name some ways that snakes are different from humans?