

Lesson Plan

Comparing Context

Book: Bighorn Sheep

Series: Animals of North America

Level: Beacon

Objective

To help students determine the meanings of words as they are used in a text through a variety of methods, including using a glossary and examining context clues.

Supplies

- *Bighorn Sheep*
- Whiteboard
- Paper and pencils
- Dictionary (or online dictionary, such as <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>)

Before the Activity

Read through the *Bighorn Sheep* book, or assign it to the students to read on their own. Then write the following list of words on the whiteboard:

1. climate
2. diurnal
3. ewe
4. herbivore
5. herd
6. impact
7. mammal
8. muzzle
9. predator
10. ram

Activity

Go through the list of words together as a class, asking the students to find the definitions for these words in the *Bighorn Sheep* book. Some words appear in the book's glossary, and some are explained or defined in the text, but some words will not have a written-out definition. For these words, students will need to use context clues to determine the word's meaning. See the attached answer key for a list of where each word appears in the *Bighorn Sheep* book.

Students should raise their hands when they have found a word's definition. Call on the first student to raise his or her hand. Ask the student to read or say the definition out loud, and write the definition on the whiteboard.

After the students have found definitions for all the words on the list, choose a volunteer to look up each word in a dictionary (or online dictionary). Write the dictionary definitions on the whiteboard, too, underneath the definitions from the *Bighorn Sheep* book. You may want to use a different colored marker for the dictionary definitions. If the dictionary gives more than one definition for a word, ask the students to choose the definition they think is the best match for the way the word is used in the text.

When the students have looked up all the words, ask the following questions:

1. Which words had definitions that were different in the dictionary than in the text?
2. For words where we created the definition from the context, which definition do you think fits the text better?
3. For words defined in the glossary, why do you think the author chose the definition she did?
4. For the words defined in the text, why do you think the author chose to explain them the way she did?

Evaluation

Could the students accurately define each word? Did they find the dictionary definitions? Did they give thoughtful answers to the questions about the differences between the definitions?

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading informational texts standards, grade 4 (RI 4.4) and language standards, grade 4 (L 4.4).

Answer Key

1. climate: used on p. 6 ("These strong animals can survive in the alpine tundra or in a desert climate.")
2. diurnal: "most active during the day" (p. 24)
3. ewes: "female sheep" (p. 9)
4. herbivore: "animals that eat mostly plants" (p. 30)
5. herd: used on p. 23 ("Bighorn sheep live in groups called herds.")
6. impact: used on p. 20 ("The stretching lessens the impact of each hit.")
7. mammals: "animals that give birth to live babies, have fur or hair, and produce milk" (p. 30)
8. muzzle: "an animal's nose and mouth" (p. 30)
9. predators: "animals that kill and eat other animals" (p. 30)
10. rams: "male sheep" (p. 9)