

## Lesson Plan

### Tundra and Taiga

**Book:** *Caribou*

**Series:** Animals of North America

**Level:** Beacon

#### Objective

To help students understand the various types of habitats in which animals live, and to explore the features and behaviors that make specific animals suited to those habitats.

#### Supplies

- *Caribou*
- Tundra and Taiga worksheet (attached)
- San Diego Zoo “Tundra” web page: <http://animals.sandiegozoo.org/habitats/tundra>
- San Diego Zoo “Taiga” web page: <http://animals.sandiegozoo.org/habitats/temperate-forest-taiga>
- National Geographic Kids “Caribou” web page: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/caribou/#caribou-standing-grass.jpg>

#### Before the Activity

Read through the *Caribou* book, or assign it to the students to read on their own. Print a Tundra and Taiga worksheet for each student (or group of students).

#### Activity

There are many types of animals, and each one is suited to live in particular habitats. Today, the students will be investigating two of the unique places where caribou live (the tundra and the taiga), as well as the features and behaviors that help caribou survive in these cold places.

First, choose a volunteer to read page 5 of the *Caribou* book. Ask the students what they know about the tundra and the taiga based on this page. Possible answers include:

- The tundra is a region in North America.
- The taiga is a swampy forest.
- Both places have extremely cold weather.

To better understand how caribou are suited to these habitats, the students will need more specific definitions. Choose a student to look up the words *tundra* and *taiga* in the book’s glossary and read the definitions out loud to the class. Then ask the students how these definitions add to what they know from page 5.

Give each student (or group of students) a Tundra and Taiga worksheet. Ask them to use the information from p. 5 and the glossary to write definitions for *tundra* and *taiga*.

Next, have each student (or group of students) fill in the blanks on the Tundra and Taiga worksheet using the San Diego Zoo's "Tundra" and "Taiga" web pages and the National Geographic Kids "Caribou" web page.

### **Evaluation**

Using the attached answer key, give the students one point for each definition and one point for each blank they fill in correctly, for a total of 30 points.

### **Standards**

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading informational texts standards, grade 3 (RI 3.4; RI 3.5) and the National Science Education Standards' Content Standard C, grades K–4.

# Tundra and Taiga

Write a definition for each word.

1. tundra: \_\_\_\_\_

2. taiga: \_\_\_\_\_

Fill in the blanks below.

1. Caribou live in the northern parts of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Tundra comes from the Finnish word, “\_\_\_\_\_,” which means \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Trees cannot survive on the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Caribou eat the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ that grow on the tundra in the summer.
5. The tundra gets as cold as \_\_\_\_\_ in the winter and as warm as \_\_\_\_\_ in the summer.
6. The lower layers of tundra soil are called \_\_\_\_\_ because they stay frozen all year long.
7. Caribou migrate \_\_\_\_\_ in the summer and \_\_\_\_\_ in the winter.
8. Caribou may travel more than \_\_\_\_\_ in one year.
9. The taiga is sometimes called a \_\_\_\_\_ forest.
10. The taiga can be under snow and ice for \_\_\_\_\_ each year.
11. Caribou use their \_\_\_\_\_ to dig through the snow for food.
12. The trees that grow on the taiga are mostly \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
13. There is a complicated relationship between the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ that grow in the taiga.
14. This relationship responds to changes in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
15. One kind of caribou, the \_\_\_\_\_, is currently endangered.

## Tundra and Taiga (ANSWER KEY)

Write a definition for each word.

1. taiga: a damp region filled with cone-producing trees.
2. tundra: a treeless plain in the arctic filled with mosses and small shrubs.

Fill in the blanks below.

1. Caribou live in the northern parts of Europe, North America, Asia, and Greenland.
2. Tundra comes from the Finnish word, "tunturi," which means treeless plain.
3. Trees cannot survive on the tundra.
4. Caribou eat the grass, mushrooms, and plants that grow on the tundra in the summer.
5. The tundra gets as cold as -76 oF (25 oC) in the winter and as warm as 77 oF (25 oC) in the summer.
6. The lower layers of tundra soil are called permafrost because they stay frozen all year long.
7. Caribou migrate north in the summer and south in the winter.
8. Caribou may travel more than 1,600 miles (2,574 km) in one year.
9. The taiga is sometimes called a boreal forest.
10. The taiga can be under snow and ice for more than six months each year.
11. Caribou use their hooves to dig through the snow for food.
12. The trees that grow on the taiga are mostly conifers and evergreens.
13. There is a complicated relationship between the trees, shrubs, and undergrowth that grow in the taiga.
14. This relationship responds to changes in soil, seasons, and climate.
15. One kind of caribou, the woodland caribou, is currently endangered.