



# Predator-Prey Tag

## Introduction

In the book *The Mouse and the Meadow*, a little mouse explores the meadow while dodging the dangers from meadow predators. In this activity, students become "mice" or "predators" as they experience the food web in an outside game of tag.

## Materials Needed

- ◆ A copy of the book
- ◆ Bandanas, enough for most of the class
- ◆ Large playing area

## Key Concepts

- ◆ Predators are animals that eat prey (other animals).
- ◆ A healthy habitat has a balance of predators and prey.
- ◆ Mice are a prey animal, and an important part of a meadow's food web.

## Procedure

1. After reading *The Mouse and the Meadow*, define the words "predator" and "prey." Discuss the predators in the story— the snake, weasel, and owl. Explain to your students they will experience the predator-prey relationship by playing a tag game.
2. Go outside and indicate the boundaries of the playing area, with two safe zones at opposite ends.
3. Choose most of your students to be "mice" and a few to be predators.
4. Have the predators spread out over the playing area, called the "meadow."
5. Give the "mice" a bandana to put in their back pocket or the waistband of their pants so that most of the bandana hangs out like a tail. Have the mice stand in a safe zone at one end of the playing, called a "burrow."
6. At your signal, have the mice leave their "burrow" to run across the "meadow" to safety on the other side of the meadow. Predators will try to "catch" the mice (their prey) by grabbing the bandana. If a mouse is caught, it then becomes a predator. If a predator doesn't catch any prey, it becomes a mouse.
7. Play several rounds until everyone has an opportunity to be both a mouse and a predator.

## Nature Connections

- ◆ Identify the predators and prey in other habitats.
- ◆ Look around the school grounds for "safe zones" where small animals can find safety from their predators.

## Additional Resources

- Read Nature's Patchwork Quilt to find out about food webs in a variety of habitats. <http://www.dawnpub.com/our-books/natures-patchwork-quilt/>
- Get interesting facts about predators and prey at the Dialogue for Kids website.
- <http://idahoptv.org/dialogue4kids/season4/prey/facts.cfm>
- Find out how predators use their senses and have various strategies for catching prey. <http://iqa.evergreenps.org/science/biology/predator-prey.htm>



# Rhyme Time

## Introduction

*The Mouse and the Meadow* is written in rhyme, with the last word in each pair of lines rhyming. In this activity, students will listen for the rhyme and brainstorm a list of additional rhyming words.

## Materials Needed

- ◆ The book *The Mouse and the Meadow*
- ◆ Paper and pencil

## Key Concepts

- ◆ Words rhyme when they sound alike.
- ◆ Stories, poems, and songs have patterns of rhyming words.
- ◆ Words may rhyme even if they are spelled differently, as "rhyme" and "time."

## Procedure

1. First read the story once all the way through. Then read it again, asking children to identify the rhyming words at the end of end of each pair of lines in stanza.
2. Select several pairs of rhyming words that are appropriate for your age group and have students work in small groups to brainstorm a list of additional rhyming words.
3. Compile the responses from all the groups to make a word wall of rhyming words.

## Nature Connections

- ◆ Many lines in the story end with words that identify specific natural locations, such as field, den, nest, hive, hole, etc. Have the class identify those words and then go outside to find as many of those places as they can around the schoolyard.

## Additional Resources

Invite students to write original poems about an animal of their choice. Have them include facts about the animal in their poem. They can write rhyming pairs of lines, or use one of these other forms of poetry:

- Cinquain— <http://www.poetry4kids.com/blog/lessons/how-to-write-a-cinquain-poem/>
- Haiku— <http://www.kidzone.ws/poetry/haiku.htm>
- Acrostic— <http://www.edu.pe.ca/stjean/playing%20with%20poetry/Hickey/acrostic.htm>



# True or Make-Believe

## Introduction

*The Mouse and the Meadow* is written in the style called “creative non-fiction”—the story is based on facts presented through a creative storyline. In this activity for young children, students determine what is true (a fact) and what is make-believe (fiction).

## Materials Needed

- ◆ The book *The Mouse and the Meadow*

## Key Concepts

- ◆ Fiction is an entertaining, make-believe story that is not real
- ◆ Non-fiction is true information that gives you facts to explain something.
- ◆ Creative non-fiction combines both facts and fiction.

## Procedure

1. Read the story *The Mouse and the Meadow*.
2. Review the terms: fact, fiction, real, and make-believe. Explain to students that in this story, some of the information is true (fact), and some of it make-believe (fiction). For example, animals can't really talk; that's make-believe. However, a snake will grab a mouse to eat; that's true.
3. Read the book again, having students first identify the “facts” and then identify the “make-believe” elements in each stanza.
4. Ask students what challenges the meadow mouse faced during his first day in the meadow. List these challenges on the board. Ask students if the challenges are true in the natural world or if are make-believe?

## Nature Connections

- ◆ Have students read about an animal and write 3 statements about it. Two of the statements should be true, and one should be make believe. Have them share their statements with another student, who tries to identify which statement isn't true.
- ◆ Identify which of the animals mentioned in the story live in your area. Learn more about them.

## Additional Resources

- ◆ Discover facts about more animals that live in a meadow.
- ◆ <http://www.exploringnature.org/db/detail.php?dbID=44&detID=568>
- ◆ Get fun, interesting, and weird facts about a variety of animals to share with your students at these websites:
- ◆ <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/animals.html>
- ◆ <http://www.globalanimal.org/2011/09/28/15-weird-animal-facts/>
- ◆ <http://www.interestinganimalsforkids.com/>



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