



THE SECRET OF THE SCORPION-EATING MEERKATS...AND MORE!

Age Range: 8-11 years

Grade Level: 3-6

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About the book:

Consider the survival strategies of meerkats as they team together in search of their most favorite delicacy – scorpions! Discover how hyena clans work to overcome fears. Marvel at the intelligence of the tool-creating capuchin monkey. Learn how the social hierarchy of the chimpanzee troupe is reflected in their bones and hair. Lastly, explore the emotional connection between horses and humans.

About the author:

Ana María Rodríguez is the daughter of Spanish immigrants, was raised in Venezuela, and moved to the United States in 1987. After being a scientist for 20 years she decided to focus on writing about science, nature, and people. She has authored 26 books for children and adults and contributed over 80 magazine articles. Her accolades include the “Highlights for Children” History Feature of the Year Award, books in Science Books & Films’ “Best Books Lists”, and awards from the Society of School Librarians International. She lives in Houston, Texas. Learn more about Ana by accessing her website at www.anamariarodriguez.com.



Discussion Questions:

MEERKATS GO TO SURVIVAL SCHOOL

- Click [HERE](#) to watch a video showcasing the meerkat’s survival school. Examine the close-knit family structure. Discuss ways that the family structure described in the text is demonstrated in the video.
- While watching the video, identify which meerkats are assuming the “helper” role in the family structure.
- Consider the meerkat mother’s role in the survival of her young. Explain why she is so completely devoted to their care.
- Describe the dangerous surroundings in which meerkats exist. Identify ways that meerkats have learned to survive in such a rugged habitat.
- Discuss your reaction to the cobra’s attack, as well as the meerkat’s attempt to eat a scorpion. Make a connection between these two moments in the video and the text.

GO TEAM HYENA!

- Explain how remarkable the hyena’s “hard-wiring for social cooperation” is demonstrated in the experiment presented in the text.
- Observe the cooperation of hyenas by clicking [HERE](#) to watch a video of the pack attacking a calf. Identify ways that the hyenas worked together, like a team, to pull the calf away from the herd, ultimately to kill it.
- Discuss how the hyena’s clan-like nature helps them to overcome their “neophobic” tendencies.

THE SURPRISING ROCK-SMASHING HABITS OF CAPUCHIN MONKEYS

- Click [HERE](#) to view a video featuring a day in the life of a capuchin monkey in the wild. Consider the determined smashing technique the capuchin monkey uses to open the clam. With all of the other food options available to the capuchin monkey, explain why it has chosen to smash open a clam.

- Explore the connection between the capuchin monkey’s ability to make “sharp-edged stone flakes” and the tools created by early man. Tell how these rudimentary tools may assist the capuchin monkey’s survival in the jungle habitat.

SOME CHIMPS LIKE MEAT ON THEIR PLATES

- Click [HERE](#) to observe the social hierarchy of chimpanzees as they hunt a colobus monkey. Notice that the “best hunter” is the first to eat, and then he shares food with the others. Knowing this, examine reasons why his “companion” would have more nitrogen in her bones than the other females in the troop.
- Discuss how the evidence of nitrogen in a chimpanzee’s bones and hair reflects its role or social standing in the troop.

A HORSE’S SECRET: HOW THEY KNOW PEOPLE’S EMOTIONS

- Explain how horse-assisted therapy can improve the health and happiness of human clients.
- Click [HERE](#) to watch a video exploring the emotional connection between humans and horses. Explore the bond between a human’s expression and the emotional reaction in the horse. Predict why a horse does not turn its head when looking at a happy human face. Consider how this reaction is similar to a human’s response to happiness.
- Tell how the ability to read human emotions serves as a survival response in some situations.
- Discuss the role of history as it relates to the emotional connection between humans and horses.

Extension Activities:

STORYBOARD MEERKAT SURVIVAL LESSONS

Storyboards are frequently used in screenplay and video production. Playwrites and producers use storyboards in the early stages of planning for their productions. Click [HERE](#) to view a sample of a completed storyboard. Notice that the storyteller has drawn a scene in the upper blocks of the storyboard grid that has been described in the section beneath.

Follow the instructions below to replicate the process by telling the story of meerkat’s scorpion-hunting and scorpion-eating lessons.

- Gather paper, markers, and pencils.
- Create a storyboard grid (or click [HERE](#) to download a .pdf version).
- Write the sequencing of the meerkat survival lessons as presented in the text in the spaces provided on the storyboard grid.
- Illustrate the steps described on the storyboard.
- Use a computer software program such as PowerPoint, Google Slides, or iMovie to produce a short video production based on your storyboard.
- Share production with the class.

THE SECRET OF THE SCORPION-EATING MEERKATS COMPLETE THE SENTENCE ANSWERS

1. Horses look at each other’s faces often. scientists think this may be a form of communication.
2. meerkat family members care for each other by working in teams.
3. hyenas form close-knit packs to keep an eye out for predators such as lions and prey such as zebras.
4. capuchin monkeys are naturally curious about their surroundings.
5. chimps get together in groups to bond and communicate.



Common Core State Standards - Anchor Standards: Reading: R.1, R.2, R.4, R.7, R.10.
Writing: W.2, W.4, W.6, W.7, W.8, W.9. Speaking & Listening: SL.1, SL.2, SL.4, SL.5.
Next Generation Science Standards: K-ESS2, K-ESS3, K-LS1.

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Complete the Sentence

Use the words in the list below to complete the sentence.

1. Horses _____ at each other's _____ often. _____ think this may be a form of _____.
2. _____ family members _____ for each other by _____ in _____.
3. _____ form close-knit _____ to keep an eye out for _____ such as lions and _____ such as _____.
4. _____ monkeys are _____ about their surroundings.
5. _____ get _____ in groups to _____ and _____.

curious	capuchin	faces	communication
teams	meerkat	prey	predators
together	scientists	care	hyenas
naturally	bond	working	look
chimps	packs	zebras	communicate