

The Tracks of My Mind: Will the Real Wolf Please Stand Up?

Teacher Notes

Grades: 5 to 8

Group Size: Whole class, small groups

Duration: 50-minute period

Skills: Classifying and categorizing, interpreting, evaluating, listening, speaking

Vocabulary: Fact, fiction, myth, belief, opinion

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this lesson students should be able to:

- Create a concept map
- Compare results
- Conduct an interview
- Discuss or write about their discoveries

MATERIALS:

- **Tracks of My Mind Concept Map**
- **Sample of completed Concept Map**
- **Tracks of My Mind Pack Worksheet**
- Colored pencils, highlighters, crayons or markers

BACKGROUND:

Perceptions are generally formed by some combination of fact, fiction, reason, emotion and cultural background. This lesson gives students a chance to examine their perceptions, thoughts and feelings about wolves and the origins of their knowledge about wolves.

PROCEDURES:

- Hand out the concept maps.
- Have students draw a picture of a wolf in the center of their maps. Encourage creativity.

They can draw the face only, the whole wolf, a cartoon — whatever they visualize.

- Say the word, “wolf.” Give students three to five minutes to write on their maps (over, under and around the paw prints) any words or phrases that come to mind pertaining to wolves.
- Tell your students to underline the word or phrases on their maps that they believe to be **fact** in red, **fiction** in blue and **opinion** in yellow. They can skip any of which they are not sure.
- Have students total their fact, fiction, opinion and unsure responses to get an idea of the basis of their knowledge and beliefs about wolves.
- Ask students to write a paragraph of at least five sentences telling what they know and feel about wolves. This can be written on the back of the map, on a separate sheet of paper or in a journal. Have them save their paragraphs to review and revise as they learn more about wolves.
- Discuss the basis of personal beliefs and how they influence our perception of information as fact or fiction. Pose the following questions to the class: On what do we base our beliefs and perceptions? Personal experience?

What others have taught us? The experiences of others? Research? The opinions of experts? Cultural traditions? Stories? How might information and the acquisition of knowledge change someone's personal beliefs? Can you think of some once firmly held beliefs that have been proven wrong? (Example: The earth is flat.)

much general knowledge about wolves comes from fact – and how much comes from opinion (personal beliefs) and myth (fiction).

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have students write some phrases or sentences telling what the pictures they've drawn on their maps indicate about their attitudes toward wolves. Does the wolf seem harmless and benign or is it the "big bad wolf" of fairytales? Does the wolf appear as a noble symbol of the wilderness? Is the drawing an accurate and objective depiction of a wolf?

- Divide the class into "packs" of three or four to share their concept maps. Have each group designate a recorder to fill in the information on the Pack Worksheet. As a springboard for further discussion, display the completed worksheets on a bulletin board or compile the information from each group on an overhead transparency. Reconvene these groups periodically as you do the lessons in this curriculum so they can see how their perceptions change as they learn more about wolves.
- Give your class tips on conducting interviews and have them interview a family member, neighbor or friend to find out what he or she knows and feels about wolves. They can even give the interviewee the **Big, Bad (?) Wolf Quiz** from the Introduction section of this manual. This interview, along with the students' own concept maps and responses to the quiz can also provide material for lively group discussion, especially after students have learned the basics about "the real wolf." Students will then be able to assess how

Concept Map Example



Hunts deer, moose,
elk& caribou



Sharp teeth



Predator



Yellow eyes



Family oriented



Whole pack help care for pups

mean



evil

