**Lesson plans for ANIMAL ZOMBIES! (NatGeoKids 2018)**

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1. **Explore text features**

One of the advantages of non-fiction texts is that they have many entry points for readers of all levels. Invite students to explore the various text features in each chapter of ANIMAL ZOMBIES. These include:

* Mad scientists: Interviews with scientists who study “animal monsters.”
* Creature features: Background on the literary and mythological sources of various “monsters”
* By the Numbers: Interesting statistics
* Did You Know? Fab facts
* Horror or helper? Are the critters really monstrous or do they have some “redeeming values”? What is their role in nature? How do they help scientists find cures for human diseases or new inventions?

**2. Literary Links**

* Ask students to read the “Creature Feature” on the chapter of their choice (e.g., the origins of zombies, vampires, kraken, aliens, and werewolves).
* Have students draw comparisons between “literary” monsters and the real-life monsters in ANIMAL ZOMBIES. For example: Describe the characteristics of Dracula that derive from vampire bats, including fangs, ability to fly, drinking blood, and being nocturnal. How do mythological zombies compare with real-life animal zombies, such as the zombie ladybug that appears on the cover or the zombie snail?
* Enrichment: Have students extend their reading to fictional books about mythological monsters and write reviews of the books they read.

**3. Life Science: Animal adaptations**

Have students identify adaptations of the creepy critters in ANIMAL ZOMBIES for each of these features:

* **Defense** (e.g., the zombie ladybug on p. 8 shakes its limbs to scare away predators from the wasp larvae; the cone snail on p. 39 shoots a harpoon from its nose; the vampire squid on p. 50 turns itself inside out displaying a “pineapple posture”…)
* **Finding mates** (e.g., the female anglerfish on p. 52 displays bioluminescence to attract mates)
* **Foraging** (e.g., blood-sucking mosquitoes, bats, leeches, and lampreys in Chapter 2; the yeti crab on p. 49 waves its arms over hydrothermal vents to collect bacteria; the goblin shark on p. 51 extends its jaw to grab prey…)
* **Camouflage** (e.g., p. 72 the see-through glass frog “disappears” on a leaf; p. 85 the tawny frogmouth blends in with bark)

**4. Horror or helper?**

Have students identify ways in which creatures featured in ANIMAL ZOMBIES are more “helpers” than “horrors.” Some examples: cone snail, leech, lamprey, vampire bat, and hagfish.

**5. Be a Bug Scientist**

Have students read Chapter 4: ANIMAL ALIENS. Challenge students to do a census of bugs in their home or school for a full week. Ask them to predict how many individual bugs they will find and how many species. They should explore dark, humid spaces, such as the cellar and the cabinet under a sink. They may take pictures or draw the creatures but advise them not to collect specimens in case some are the stinging or biting variety. At the end of the week, ask how many individuals and species they found. Can they name them?