



Teaching with

Blades of Green

Adventures in Backyard Habitats

Preview

- Read the title, including the subtitle.
- Have students use the title and cover illustration to predict the focus of the book. Ask them to support their predictions by stating clues (details) in the title and illustrations.

Prepare

- Discuss with students how to navigate the text. For example, suggest that they read the main text first on each page, then closely examine the picture and any special features (e.g., "It's a Fact"). Remind them to think about how these special features illustrate the text, clarify ideas, or add new information.
- Have students browse the book, noticing any special features. Ask them to generate questions they have about backyard habitats that might be answered in the text.
- Activate prior knowledge by having students turn to a partner and name two or three animals that live in a backyard.

Vocabulary

- **Academic Vocabulary** Preteach the following academic words using the Define-Example-Ask Routine: *consumes, habitat*.

Define: *Consumes* means "eats."

Example: *The dog consumes two bowls of food each day.*

Ask: *What did you consume today?*

Define: A *habitat* is "a place plants and animals live." It provides food, water, and shelter.

Example: *A backyard is a habitat to many insects and small animals.*

Ask: *What different kinds of habitats are near your home?*

- **Additional Words** Use a student-friendly definition, the illustrations, and context clues to highlight these words while reading: *roar, sniff, sprouts, slithers, trek, whiff, disturbed, twig, distance, environment*.

Close Reading

Guide students through a reading of the book to increase overall comprehension and develop generalizable reading skills.

Text-Based Questions Ask the following questions while reading. Have students provide evidence in the text and illustrations to support their answers.

(page 7) *Why did the author repeat the detail about the smell of fresh-cut grass?*

(page 9) *What animal did Savannah run into? What clues tell you this?*

(page 10) *Why are earthworm tunnels important? Which text details support your answer?*

(page 13) *What does the author want us to know about the importance of camouflage?*

(page 15) *What clues help you determine the meaning of “decay”?*

(page 17) *Why did the author include the “It’s a Fact” feature? How does it relate to the text?*

(page 23) *Why does Savannah want to go home? Why do you think this?*

(page 25) *Why did the author include the detail about the cookie smell?*

Reinforce Vocabulary

- **Content Vocabulary** After reading, review the following content words using the glossary on page 31: *camouflage, decay, insect, predator, reptile*. Have partners read each word and definition, then find the sentence in the book containing the word.
- **Build Vocabulary Strategies** Increase student’s general word awareness skills using the following words: *harmless, blades*.

harmless (suffixes): Write the word and underline the suffix *-less*. Explain that a suffix is a word part added to the end of a base word. It changes the word’s meaning. Readers use the meaning of the suffix to determine the whole word’s meaning. Point out that *-less* means “less” or “without.” So, *harmless* means “without harm.”

blades (multiple-meaning words): Explain that some words have more than one meaning. Ask students to name all the meanings they know for blades (e.g., leaf of a plant as in a “blade of grass,” the flat cutting part of a knife). Suggest they consult a dictionary, if necessary. Remind students to use context clues while reading to determine which meaning of a multiple-meaning word an author is using. Model using the text and illustration on page 5.

Use the Tools Discuss why the author included each of these nonfiction tools and how students can use them to better understand the text.

- **Table of Contents** Review the Table of Contents on page 3. Explain that readers use this feature in informational text to quickly find the facts they need (or sections of text they want to read). Point out that, unlike fiction, readers don’t always read an entire nonfiction book (e.g., when doing research).

- **Boldfaced Words** Ask students to find and record the boldfaced words in the text. Ask: *Why did the author put these words in special type?* Remind students to pay careful attention to words in special type while reading to aid in comprehension. These are key words the author wants the reader to know and remember.
- **Diagram** Use one of the diagrams on pages 26-30 to model how to read this text feature. Point out the callouts/labels. Guide students to make the connection between the diagram details and the main text. Ask: *Why do authors include diagrams? How do they help the reader?*

Imagine This! Build comprehension using the interactive game (see page 4). Share with students the directions below. **Alternate:** Divide the class into teams to play; the members may help each other and the first team to reach WINNER space wins.

Players: 2

Materials: plastic cup, penny, place marker for each player

To Play:

- 1** Each player in turn shakes the penny in the cup, then spills it out. If the penny lands on heads, the player moves 1 space. If it lands on tails, the player moves 2 spaces.
- 2** The player then answers the question. If correct, the player stays on the space. If incorrect, the player skips a turn. Players landing on a penalty square only incur the penalty once, even if they land on the square again. Also, players can challenge their opponent's answer, then check the book to confirm.
- 3** Each player continues in turn. The first player to reach the WINNER space wins.

Extend

- **Backyard Habitat Journal** Take students to the school's backyard or a nearby park. Have them use hand lenses and their journals to observe and record the insects and animals they encounter in this habitat. If available, take photos. Print the pictures to use during classroom discussions about backyard habitats.
- **Book Jacket Blurbs** Have students write a book jacket blurb to invite others to read *Blades of Green*. Suggest that they include the three most interesting things they read about backyard habitats.
- **Research It** Have students use the books or web sites on page 32 to learn more about one of the insects or animals in the book. Suggest they make a Backyard Animal Fact Card to summarize their findings.



START

Name three animals in a backyard habitat.

What does a ladybug look like?

Good Job Moving!
Take an extra turn.

What's another word for **decay**?

How does being stinky help a stink bug?

What do earthworms dig?



Hop on a lady bug!
Move ahead 1 space.

What are "Blades of Green" in the title?

Ant Crossing Wait!
Miss a turn.



Is a habitat a person, place, or thing?



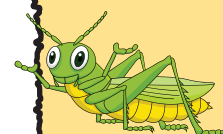
Danger! Tunnel Ahead!
Move back 1 space.

What camouflage does a praying mantis have?

What does **consume** mean?

Name two examples of insects.

What part of a plant grows under the ground?



What **predator** eats earthworms?

Ride on a seed!
Take an extra turn.

How many legs does an insect have?

Praying Mantis!
Don't move.
Miss a turn.

What's the opposite of **harmless**?

Garter Snake on the Move!
Go back 1 space.



What fact proves that ants are strong?

How does a ladybug help a garden?

Rest on a log!
Miss a turn.

Point to your **mandible**.

Name two examples of reptiles.

WINNER

Imagine That!