

Fantastic Creatures Activity

This curriculum has been adapted from our Education Outreach program, Fantastic Creatures! You can bring our performance or workshops to your school. To find out more, visit MoPOP.org/Outreach

Overview

The Big Idea	Using our imaginations and everyday objects, we can create our own fantasy creatures.
Summary	Students will think creatively and critically about everyday objects, transform the objects into body parts for never-before-seen creatures, and adapt them to habitats. Then, they will take these creatures and create a story about it
Grades	K-8
Time	60+ mins
Supplies	Printed worksheets, pen/pencil/markers/crayons/colored pencils- whatever art materials you prefer!
Vocabulary	Fantasy, specimen, texture, encyclopedia, environment, shape, discovery, storytelling

Learning Standards

Common Core State Standards	ELA-LITERACY: CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.SL.4, CCRA.L.1, , CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.6
WA State Science Learning Standards	K-LS1-1, K-ESS2-2, K-ESS3-1, 2-L-S4-1, 3-L-S4-1, 3-LS3-2
WA Arts Standards	Visual Art: Cr1-6.K, Cr1-2.1, Cr1-2.2, Cr1-2.3, Cr.1.1.4, Cr.1.1.5, Cr.1.1.6
21st Century Skills	Learning & Innovation: Creativity, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Communication Life & Career Skills: Flexibility and Adaptability, Initiative and Self-Direction
Artist Habits of Mind	Engage & Persist, Envision, Express, Observe, Reflect, Stretch & Explore

PART 1: What is a Fantasy Creature

Think to yourself: what is the definition of a fantasy creature?

When we think about fantasy creatures, we think about an animal in real life that has fantastic or magical elements added to it.

Examples:

- So if we take a lizard, and make it gigantic, and make it breathe fire, what fantasy creature have we created?
- And if we take a horse, but give it magical powers and a horn, what fantasy creature have we created?

Fantasy creatures exist in books, on TV, in movies, and in our own imaginations. Today, you are going to make your own, never-before-seen fantasy creature!

You will become **scientists who study fantastic creatures**. We'll use everyday items as inspiration and add a little bit of magic to build a fantasy creature from scratch.



This dragon is located in MoPOP's Fantasy: Worlds of Myth and Magic Exhibit!

Part 2: Finding Specimens

Specimen: an individual plant, species, or mineral used for scientific study or display.

In this step, you'll put together a set of specimens. Later, you'll use those specimens to create a completely unique fantasy creature.

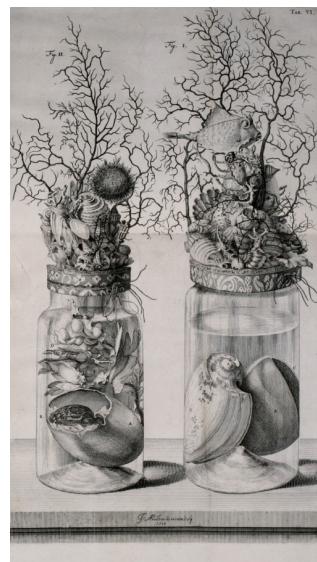
DIRECTIONS: Find the following objects...

- Something with a texture that you think is interesting (e.g. something bumpy, smooth, soft, scaly, etc.)
 - Something that is a color you like (e.g. blue, marigold, green, cerise, teal, etc.)
 - A liquid (e.g. water, dish soap, juice, etc.)
 - Something dirt-like (e.g. a spice, pebbles, actual dirt, etc.)
 - Any object from nature (e.g. a leaf, branch, pinecone, etc.)

Once you have found your objects, bring them back to your workspace and continue to Part 3

Keep in mind:

- You can look for these objects outside, or around your home.
 - If you go outside, stay 6 feet away from people around you.
 - Make sure you have permission to use any objects you find.
 - When getting objects from nature, try to find something that isn't alive. Can you find something that has fallen off a plant, or is on the ground? If there is a live thing you really like, you may observe it up close and take pictures of it for reference later, rather than bringing it inside with you.



PART 3: Building A Creature

Congratulations! You now have a set of specimens. In this part, you'll use those specimens to create a brand-new fantasy creature. Here is how you will do this:

- A. Examine your specimens
- B. Draw conclusions about your creature
- C. Create an online encyclopedia page about your creature



A. Examining Specimens

Scientists learn a lot about creatures by examining specimens. You will do the same thing here with the objects you found.

We're going to imagine that all the objects you collected are specimens from a fantasy creature's body. List your specimens and write down some things you notice about them on the attached chart. Note how the specimens *feel, look, and smell*.

Once you have made observations, decide what part of your creature's body the specimen comes from. There is an example on the next page to help you. There are no wrong answers. You are creating this fantasy creature from your own imagination, so any of your ideas can work!

Example: 	Observations: Green, waxy, has veins on it, very light.	I think this specimen is.. The creature's feathers. It is covered in these leaves like a bird is covered in feathers
Specimen #1	Observations:	I think this specimen is...
Specimen #2	Observations:	I think this specimen is...
Specimen #3	Observations:	I think this specimen is...
Specimen #4	Observations:	I think this specimen is...
Specimen #5	Observations:	I think this specimen is...



B. Drawing Conclusions

You just took field notes on specimens, just like scientists do!

Scientists use their observations to draw conclusions about a creature. With just specimens, a scientist can figure out where a creature lives, what it eats, and even what it looks like.

Using your notes and specimens to help you, **take a moment to answer the following questions about your creature.** You may write down your answers on a separate sheet of paper if that is helpful. You may also draw a sketch of your creature as you come up with new ideas.

Remember, there are no wrong answers. This is a fantasy creature that has never existed before, so any of your ideas can work!

How big is this Fantasy Creature?

What kinds of limbs does this creature have? Arms and legs? A fin? Wings? How many of these limbs does it have?



What does this fantasy creature eat?

What type of environment/habitat does it live in?

Does your creature build its shelter? What kind of shelter does it build?



Does this creature live alone (like a bear does), or travel in a pack (like wolves do)?

*Describe any other interesting features of your creature. Does it have thumbs? Does it love to swim? Be as creative as you want! If you get stuck, **use your specimens to guide you.***

Give your creature a name!

C. Your Creature's Online Encyclopedia Page

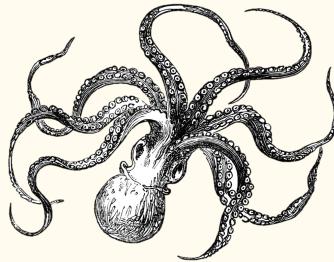
You used your specimens to draw conclusions about your fantasy creature's life, just like scientists do! Now you will create an **online encyclopedia page** for your creature.

An **encyclopedia** contains information on all sorts of topics. They used to be published as books, but nowadays, most encyclopedias are online. Here are some examples:

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the Britannica Kids website. The URL in the address bar is kids.britannica.com/kids/article/toad/390140. The page title is "toad". On the left, there is a large image of a toad. Below the image, a caption reads: "Unlike frogs, toads have rough, dry skin. They are usually covered with growths that look like warts." A credit line follows: "© Crystal Stock—Sugarycandy/Dreamstime.com". To the right of the image, there is a text block: "Toads are small animals often confused with frogs. Toads, however, have dry, rough skin and short legs. Frogs have moist, smooth skin and longer legs." Another text block below it says: "Toads can be found in all but the coldest parts of the world. They are amphibians, meaning that they live on both land and water. However, toads generally spend more of their time on land than they do in the water." At the bottom of this section, there is a note: "Toads have squat, plump bodies. They do not have tails. They range from about 1 to 10 inches (2.5 to 25 centimeters) long. Their skin is usually brownish olive, often with some darker spots. One group, called variegated toads, has large back feet and are bright yellow, red, or green with black spots....". On the right side of the page, there is a sidebar with a "Did You Know?" section containing the text: "One toad bends its head and limbs over its body to show its orange hands and feet when it is bothered." Below the sidebar are several icons for printing, sharing, and saving.

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the Wikipedia article for "Burrowing owl". The URL in the address bar is en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burrowing_owl. The page title is "Burrowing owl". The sidebar on the left contains links such as Main page, Contents, Featured content, Current events, Random article, Donate to Wikipedia, Wikipedia store, Interaction, Help, About Wikipedia, Community portal, Recent changes, Contact page, Tools, What links here, Related changes, Upload file, Special pages, Permanent link, Page information, and Wikidata item. The main content area starts with a note: "For the Canadian winery, see [Burrowing Owl Estate](#)". It then describes the burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) as a small, long-legged owl found throughout open landscapes of North and South America. The text continues to describe their habitat, nesting habits, and hunting behavior. A "Contents [hide]" section lists numbered sections: 1 Description, 2 Taxonomy and systematics, 3 Range and habitat, 4 Ecology and behaviour (with sub-sections 4.1 Food and feeding, 4.2 Reproduction), 5 Status and conservation, 6 References, 7 Further reading, and 8 External links. To the right of the text, there is a large image of a Burrowing owl perched on a branch. Below the image, a caption reads: "Brazilian burrowing owl *A. c. grammica* Pantanal, Brazil". At the bottom right, there is a "Conservation status" section with the word "Least".

Create your online encyclopedia page on the attached sheet. In the spaces provided, write your creature's name, draw a picture of it in its living environment, and describe it in words. Make the page as colorful as you want.



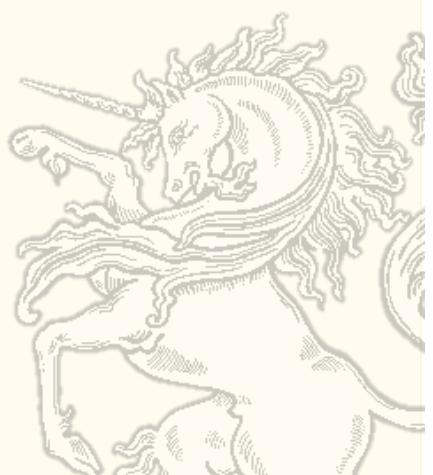
ENCYCLOPEDIA CURIOSA
AN ONLINE ENCYCLOPEDIA FOR FANTASY CREATURES



[Your Fantasy Creature's Name]

[A Picture of Your Creature in its Living Environment]

[Some words about your Creature]





Part 4: Tell your own unique story about your creature!

You've already done some thinking about how your creature lives and what it does, and now you're ready to write a story! Below we have some story starters to spark your imagination. You can use some or all of these. If your imagination takes you in a different direction, that's okay too! These are just meant to give you some ideas.

In the boxes below, draw or write what happens.

Your creature, _____ wakes up from a dream. **What were they dreaming about?** (Other ideas: What time do they wake up? Where do they sleep? Do they make any noises when they sleep? What does that sound like?)

Now that _____ is awake, they decide it is time for breakfast. **What do they eat?** (Other ideas: Do they eat the same thing every day? How do they prepare it? What is their least favorite food?)



After breakfast, they go exploring. They find a glowing oval, swirling with rainbow colors in front of them- it must be a portal! They step through the portal- where does it take them?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a child to draw where the portal takes the characters.

Where does your creature go, and what do they do? How do they get back home?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a child to draw where the creature goes and how it gets back home.

Part 5: Final Reflection

At MoPOP in our *Fantasy: Worlds of Myth and Magic* exhibit, there are all kinds of creatures where people did exactly what you did today: they took things they know from science and combined them with their imagination. Here are some examples:





Put your work on display in your home and invite your family to come observe it. As museum guests, they can ask you, the artist and writer, about the choices you made in creating your creature and telling its story. You can even share your creation online with the hashtag #MoPOPDontStop so our team can see what you created!

If you want to create more art inspired by your creature, you could make a short video, draw a comic strip, write a longer story, or much more! You could even submit your story to our Write Out of This World program, a short story and comic book competition for students. You can find more info at: mopop.org/wootw

Looking for more inspiration? Check out these films, graphic novels, and books! Some of these are in our *Fantasy: Worlds of Myth and Magic* exhibit, those are noted with an Asterix*. (Parents: please check these on your own to make sure they're an appropriate fit for your child.)

- The *Harry Potter* Series- JK Rowling (books & films)*
- *Akata Witch* by Nnedi Okorafor (YA novel)
- *Malice in Oveland*- Micheline Hess (graphic novel)
- *Dragon Pearl*- Yoon Ha (YA novel)
- *Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky*- Kwame Mbalia (YA novel)
- *The Abyss Surrounds Us*- Emily Skrutskie (YA novel)
- *Killer of Enemies*- Joseph Bruchac (YA Novel)
- *The Princess & the Frog* (film)
- *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them*- JK Rowling (books & films)
- *How to Train Your Dragon*- Cressida Cowell (books & films)
- *My Neighbor Totoro* (film)
- *The Wizard of Oz*- L. Frank Baum (books & films)*
- *The Princess Bride*- William Goldman (book & film)*
- *Where the Wild Things Are* – Maurice Sendak (book & film)