

Predator and Prey Classroom Guide (suggestions for grades 3-5)

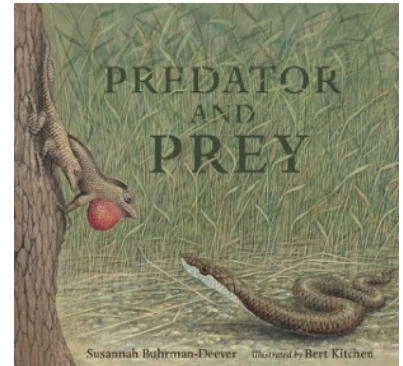
Title: Predator and Prey: A Conversation in Verse

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Book description: Poetry (paired poems and poems for two voices) and prose describe the battles between predators and prey as they fight, spy, lie, and even tell the truth to get ahead.

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Introduction to the book

After reading the title (*Predator and Prey: A Conversation in Verse*) and looking at the cover, ask students what they think this book will be about. What does predator mean? What does prey mean? Why do predators hunt? (Help students understand that if a predator is going to survive and have young, it needs food. Predators may be hunters, but they are not evil.) What do you think a “conversation in verse” means?

You may find it helpful to post a Wall of Words/Vocabulary list in the classroom so students may add new words as they explore the book.

Science Study: How Behavior Can Help Animals Survive

[NGSS 4-LS1-1, MS-LS1-4]

Predators and prey don't only use physical weapons (like speed, claws, teeth, horns, etc.) in their battles. The encounters described in this book can be used to examine how animal behaviors can help them survive (either by capturing food or escaping a predator).

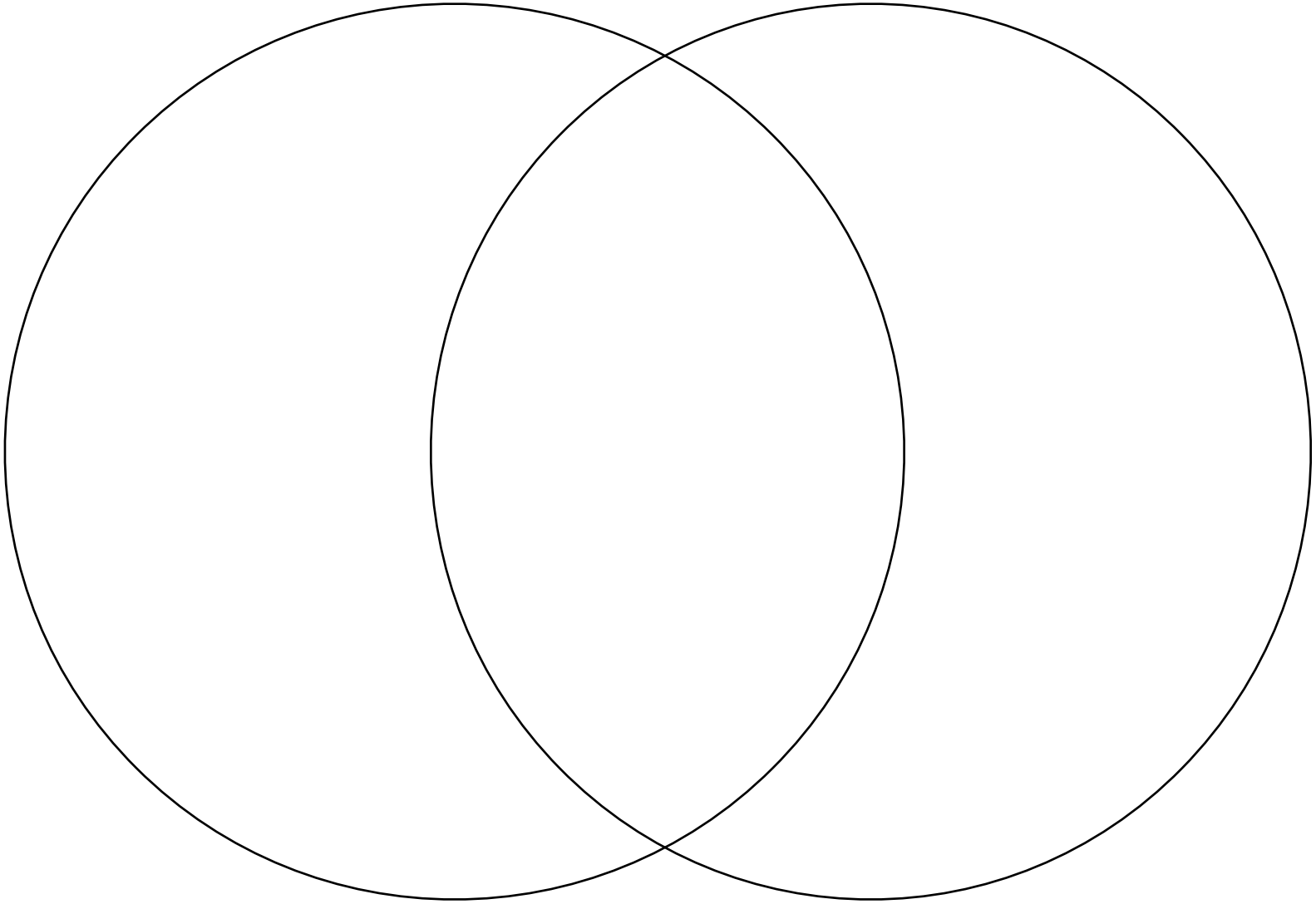
Before reading the book, ask students to share what they know about about predators and prey. They can name predators and prey they are familiar with, strategies/tools predators use to catch their prey, and strategies/tools prey use to defend themselves.

You can write these up on the board as “Strategies for Survival: Predators and Prey” Venn diagram (see below), or students can write down their ideas on their own before sharing as a class.

Strategies for Survival: Predators and Prey

What do predators use to catch their prey?

What do prey use to defend themselves?



Next, read the book's introduction together. As you explore the poems and nonfiction notes in the book, have students think about how the animals are behaving in each poem, referring back to the information in introduction. Is one animal tricking the other? Is it telling its opponent the truth? Is one animal using its senses to get helpful information about another (eavesdropping)? How might each behavior help them survive?

You can add new predator and prey strategies you discover as you read the book on the "Strategies for Survival" Venn diagram.

If exploring individual poems/nonfiction notes on their own, students can use the "Exploration of Animal Behavior" worksheet to answer these questions before returning and sharing in a class discussion.

Exploration of Animal Behavior

An animal's *behavior* is what an animal does. An animal's behavior helps it survive and raise young. Behavior includes how an animal finds food, finds or builds a home, moves, and how it interacts with other animals (including how it "talks" to other animals). When scientists study animal behavior, they are trying to understand how and why animals do what they do.

As you read each poem and nonfiction note, think about what each animal does (its behavior) and why it might do it.

Poem Title(s): _____

Who is the predator? _____

Who is the prey? _____

How does the predator hunt its prey? _____

How does the prey try to escape? _____

Predator and Prey Classroom Guide: Language Arts

An Exploration of Poetic Techniques

Several different poetry forms are used throughout this book:

Poem for Two Voices: (“What Webs We Weave”; “Spies”; “Sound Wars”; “What is That?”)
A poem for two voices uses two “speakers”, and is best read aloud. One speaker’s lines are on the left-hand side of the page; the second speaker’s lines are on the right. When their words are on the same line, their lines are spoken at the same time.

Free Verse: (“Startling Beauty”; “The Sharp-shinned Hawk’s Reply”)
Free verse poems don’t follow a set meter (rhythm) or rhyme pattern.

Persona (Mask) Poem: (All poems in this book.)
A persona, or mask, poem is written in the voice of the subject.

Cinquain: (“Shadow Striker”)
A cinquain is a five line poem. There are several different forms for cinquains. “Shadow Striker” uses a version that was developed by poet Adelaide Crapsey (biography at <https://www.poetry-foundation.org/poets/adelaide-crapsey>), where the cinquain is made up of 22 syllables across five lines (2, 4, 6, 8, 2).

Reverso: (“Unlucky in Love”/“Femme fatale”)
A reverso poem uses the same lines in reverse order for a second speaker. This form was developed by poet Marilyn Singer. (For more information on how she developed the form, see: <https://www.readbrightly.com/reverso-poetry-writing-verse-reverse/>)

Some poetry techniques:

Alliteration: The repetition of the starting consonant sound of a word. An example: “**P**eter picked a pea pod.”

Assonance: The repetition of vowel sounds. An example: “**We** leap into the deep.”

Consonance: The repetition of consonant sounds. An example: “**Pitter, patter** tapped the rain.”

Meter: The rhythm of the poem. The line “The eagle soared above the sea” has a different meter than the line “Timmy tumbled down the stairs.” It’s often easier to notice a metrical pattern when reading aloud. (Examples from the book that use different meters: “Push Up Power”, “A Call to Arms”, “Sound Wars”)

End Rhyme: where the last words of the lines rhyme. An example: “I saw a **bee**/ beside a **tree**”.

Internal Rhyme: rhyme used within a line. An example: “**Rapping, tapping** on my door”.

You can use the discussion suggestions (see below) to explore the techniques and imagery used in the different poems.

You may also choose to do a “Think Aloud” model exploration of poetic techniques a specific poem, before students explore additional poems on their own. For example, after reading “What Webs We Weave” aloud as a class, you might notice that at the beginning of the poem, both the spider and the assassin bug both declare “I am hunter”, but at the end the spider’s voice has gone quiet. “I wonder why that is?”

For independent work exploring the different poetry techniques used in the books, students can use the “Poem Study” worksheet (page 10).

Discussion Ideas for Individual Poems:

“What Webs We Weave (A Poem for Two Voices)”

This a poem is shared by two speakers, the spider and the assassin bug. The spider’s words are on the left hand side, and the assassin bug’s are on the right. When their words are on the same line, the two are speaking at the same time.

Read this poem for two voices aloud. (The reading can be shared between two students or two groups of students.) Then read the nonfiction note. Looking back at the poem, who do you think has survived: the spider or the assassin bug? How can you tell?

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RL 3.2; RI.3.1; RI.3.7; RI.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.5.3]

“Spies”

This is another poem for two voices (túngara frog and fringe-lipped bat). Read aloud as a class (either shared between two students or groups of students) and read the nonfiction note. What happens to the frog chorus at the end of the poem and why?

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RI.3.1; RI.3.7; RL4.1; RL.5.1; RI.5.1; NGSS 4-LS1.D, MS-LS1-4]

“Unlucky in Love”/“Femme Fatale”

This reverso poem shows two sides to the same story. A reverso poem uses the same lines in reverse order for the second speaker.

First read the poem aloud, then the nonfiction note. Why does the male flash? Why does this female flash?

(Extra credit: Why do you think the author chose the reverso poem form for this pairing?)

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RI.3.1; RI.3.7; RL.5.3]

“Ant Armies” and “The Scent of Danger”

Read the two poems and the nonfiction note. What do the ants use their scent trail for? How does the bee’s sense of smell help protect it from an ant attack?

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RL.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.5.3; RL.5.4; NGSS 4-LS1.D]

“A Call to Arms”, “PSST—Hide!”, and “The Sharp-Shinned Hawk’s Reply”

Read the two chickadee alarm call poems (“PSST—Hide!” and “A Call to Arms”). How are they different in form? (Length, word choice, meter, etc.) Then read the nonfiction note. What are the two calls the chickadees use when a predator is spotted? How are they different, and why? How does being part of a group help a chickadee survive?

Extra credit: Why do you think the author chose to write the two chickadee poems the way she did? How are they similar? How are they different?

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RL.3.4; RL.3.5; RI.3.1; RI.3.2; RL.4.1; RL.4.2; RL.4.5; RL.5.1; RL.5.3; RL.5.4; NGSS 3-LS2.D]

“Patience of a Snake” and “Hot-Tempered Squirrel”

Read “Patience of a Snake.” Based on the poem, how do you think a rattlesnake attacks its prey? Next, read the nonfiction note. Does the description of how the rattlesnake attacks fit your idea from the poem?

Read “Hot-Tempered Squirrel.” What do you think it means when the squirrel says “I’m hot/and bothered./I’m hot/under the collar.”? Read the nonfiction note. Does your understanding of “hot” change?

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RI.3.1; RL.4.1; RI.4.1; RL.5.1; RL.5.4; RI.5.1]

“Sound Wars”

This is another poem for two voices, but the “moth” voice stays quiet for most of the poem, until it bursts in with a “CLICK!” series. Read the poem aloud, and then the nonfiction note. Why do you think the author chose to have the moth quiet for most of the poem?

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RI.3.1; RI.3.2; RL.4.1; RI.4.1; RL.5.1; RI.5.1]

“Don’t Eat Here”

Read the poem and the nonfiction note. What did you learn about how animals talk to their predators using their colors? Can you think of other animals that use bright colors or bold patterns that might tell others to “stay away”? (Extra credit: How could you test that idea?)

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RI.3.1; RL.4.1; RI.4.1; RL.5.1; RI.5.1; NGSS 4-LS1.A]

“Look-Alikes”

Read the poem aloud and look at the illustration. Who is speaking in the poem? How do you know? In this poem, the speaker describes two different animals. Read the poem and the nonfiction note. Which animal is telling its predator the truth and which isn’t?

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RI.3.1; RL.4.1; RI.4.1; RL.5.1; RI.5.1; NGSS 4-LS1.A]

“Startling Beauty” and “What is That?”

Read “Startling Beauty” and look at the illustrations. To whom is the peacock butterfly speaking in this poem?

Read the nonfiction note. What are two ways the butterfly uses its coloring to protect itself from predators? Why do you think the author refers to a resting butterfly as “cloaked in quiet” and a “silent prayer”?

Read “What is That? (A Poem for Two Voices)” and the nonfiction note. How does each animal (the blue tit and the mouse) react to the butterfly display? Why might the butterfly display use both a color pattern and sound to scare off predators?

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RI.3.1; RI.3.7; RL.4.1; RI.4.1; RI.4.3; RL5.1; RI.5.1; RI.5.3; NGSS 4-LS1.A]

“Shadow Striker” and “Push-up Power”

Read both poems and the nonfiction note. What is the lizard saying to the snake with its push-ups? Why should the snake pay attention to what the anole is saying?

Compare the word choice for each poem, paying attention to the rhythm and mood of each. How are they different? Why do you think the author chose those “voices” for each animal?

[CSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; RI.3.1; RI.3.3; RL.4.1; RL.4.5; RI.4.1; RI.4.3; RL.5.1; RI.5.3]

Poem Study

Read the poem aloud. Then answer the following questions:

Does the poem use repeated sounds? (Look for rhyme, vowel sounds, consonant sounds.) If so, which ones?

Does the poem have a repeated rhythm (a beat, or meter)? If yes, how does the rhythm make you feel?

Read the poem again. Write down descriptive words and images used in the poems. Circle ones you especially like. Put a question mark by any that are confusing.

How does the poem make you feel? Why?

Science and Writing Activity

Exploring Relationships in Nature: Creating a “Conversation in Verse” Between Two Living Things.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.4, 3.7, 3.9; 4.4, 4.7, 5.4, 5.7]

Have students choose two living things (organisms) that have a relationship with each another. They may be predator and prey, or have a partnership (like that between a butterfly and a flowering plant).

Students can use library books and/or websites to conduct research about their subjects. After they’ve completed their research, they can write a pair of poems (one for each “voice”) and a nonfiction note explaining the relationship using the information they’ve learned. The “nonfiction note” would include the names of each organism (e.g. butterfly and flowering plant) and what each organism “wants,” or the reason why each organism does what it does. For example, a butterfly visits a flower to get nectar for food. A flowering plant makes nectar so a butterfly will visit it and pollinate the flower, which will help the plant make seeds.)

You may choose to use the following worksheets to help guide students in their research and brainstorming:

Organism Research Sheet (page 12)

Persona Poem Brainstorming (page 13)

Writing a Nonfiction Note (page 14)

Invite students to share their poems and nonfiction notes with the class.

Organism Research Sheet

Organism Name

(Include scientific name:
Genus species)

What does it look like?

(Include size, color,
shape, special body
parts)

Where does it live? (What
is its habitat?)

What does it eat? How
does it get its food?

What eats it? (Who are its
predators?)

How does it defend it-
self?

Other behaviors (sounds
it makes, how it moves,
how it uses its senses,
family life, etc.)

Other interesting facts I
learned

Persona (Mask) Poem Brainstorming:

First, look through your research notes and pick the facts you want to use in your poem. Then, use your observations from videos, pictures, or real-life to describe your organism. Finally, imagine what it would feel like to be that organism. Try to use all of your senses in your descriptions (sight, smell, hearing, touch, maybe even taste). Then use your ideas to make your poem.

What I Know (The Facts)	What I Observe (from videos, pictures, real life watching)	What I Would Feel If I Were A...

Writing a “Nonfiction Note”

Your “nonfiction note” should include the names of each organism and why each organism does what it does. You can use your answers to these questions to help guide your writing.

What are the names of your organisms?

What does organism #1 do?

Why?

What does organism #2 do?

Why?

Related Science and Language Arts Activities

Library Research “Found” Poetry:

Found poems use snippets of existing writing to create a poem. Students can use library books and/or websites (such as All About Birds (allaboutbirds.org) or animals.NationalGeographic.com) to research a particular animal and its behaviors.

Have students note words and phrases from their research sources that stand out to them. They can use those found phrases to build a poem portrait of their chosen animal.

(This can also be done as a Blackout poem. See this post by John DePasquale on blackout poems as an example: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/john-depasquale/blackout-poetry/>)

Observation and Riddle Poems

Set aside time for students to observe animals and take notes on what they are doing. (Insects can be a great choice for students to follow outside, or you can use other tools, like a classroom bird feeder to watch birds.)

Reassure students that it’s okay to be unsure about what the animals are doing or why they are doing it. That is part of the scientific process. Encourage them to write down any questions they have about their animals. They can use library or web research or guidebooks to try to answer their questions later.

[Extra credit: If students can’t answer their questions from further book/internet research, encourage them to think of ways they can answer their questions themselves (follow the animals for longer, come up with an experiment, etc.)]

Then, ask students to write a riddle poem based upon their observations, research, or facts about their animal they already know. Encourage students to think about their animal’s size, shape, and what it does. They will need to include enough detail that a reader can guess what their animal is. A furry four-legged animal can be many things (dog, cat, raccoon, lion, squirrel, etc.); using specific details can help a reader see what makes that animal unique.

The final line of the riddle poem asks, “Who am I?”

Example:

I wriggle on rainy sidewalks
Sometimes I’m bait for fishermen
Sometimes I’m robin-dinner
But I much prefer
To munch my way through the earth

(What goes in is what goes out)
Who am I?

(...an earthworm)

Students can share their poems with the class, and have the audience guess what animal is the subject.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.4, 3.7, 3.9; 4.4, 4.7, 5.4, 5.7]

Other Ways to Observe Animal Behavior with Students:

You can also watch and/or listen to examples of animal behavior through online collections.

- Many aquaria and zoos (such as the Monterey Bay Aquarium, The National Zoo in Washington and the San Diego Zoo) offer live webcam views of different animals.
- The Macaulay Library is a large repository of animal sounds and videos from around the world. It has a searchable database where students can look up different animals they are interested in. (There are more sounds available than videos.) (<https://www.macaulaylibrary.org>)
- You can also get involved as a class in a citizen science program like Project FeederWatch (<https://feederwatch.org>) and Project NestWatch (<https://nestwatch.org>), both through the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology.