

Focus Question:

What do all river otters have in common?

Book Summary

Text Type: Nonfiction/Informational

River Otters introduces students to some amazingly athletic creatures. The text describes the physical appearance and habits of river otters. Detailed photographs enhance the information provided by the text. The book can also be used to teach students how to identify the main idea and details as well as how to locate the simple subject.



Lesson Essentials

Instructional Focus

- ☐ Visualize to understand text
- ☐ Identify main idea and details
- ☐ Describe information provided by photographs
- ☐ Discriminate short vowel /i/ sound
- ☐ Identify short vowel *i*
- ☐ Recognize and use simple subjects
- ☐ Identify and use the high-frequency word *all*

Materials

- ☐ Book: *River Otters* (copy for each student)
- ☐ Main idea and details, short vowel *i*, simple subjects worksheets
- ☐ Discussion cards
- ☐ Book quiz
- ☐ Retelling rubric

Vocabulary

Boldface vocabulary words also appear in a pre-made lesson for this title on VocabularyA-Z.com. (*) word appears in the lesson but not the book

- **High-frequency words:** *all, good, have*
- **Words to Know**
Story critical: *amazing* (adj.), *breath* (n.), *catching* (n.), *fur* (n.), *river otters* (n.), *swimming* (n.)
- **Academic vocabulary:** *detail* (adj.)*, *idea* (n.)*, *main* (adj.)*

Guiding the Reading

Before Reading

Build Background

- Write the word *amazing* on the board and read it aloud to students. Have students work in small groups to discuss the definition of *amazing*. Invite them to share their discussions with the class. Then have students return to their small groups to discuss things they think are amazing.
- Discuss with students what makes an animal amazing. Have students draw on a separate piece of paper a picture of an animal they find amazing. Invite volunteers to share their picture with the rest of the class.

Introduce the Book

- Give students their copy of *River Otters*. Guide them to the front and back covers and read the title. Have students discuss what they see on the covers. Encourage them to offer ideas as to what type of book it is (genre, text type, and so on) and what it might be about.
- Show students the title page. Discuss the information on the page (title of book, author's name).

Introduce the Reading Strategy: **Visualize**

Explain to students that engaged readers visualize, or create pictures in their mind, as they read. Explain that readers make visual images using information from the text and what they already know about the subject. Point out that the pictures in a book can also provide information to add to visualizations. Have students close their eyes as you read page 4 aloud. Ask students to draw a representation of what they visualized. Invite volunteers to share their visualization with the rest of the class, and discuss how their pictures compare to the picture in the book.

Introduce the Comprehension Skill:

Main idea and details

- Explain to students that most books have a main idea, which is what the book is mostly about. Point out that the supporting details are the facts used to describe the main idea and that these supporting details make the main idea clear to the reader.

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

- Discuss the cover picture and title page with students, and explain that the pictures and title often provide clues about the book's main idea. Have students work with a partner to predict the main idea. Invite volunteers to share their predictions with the rest of the class. Guide the class to read page 3 aloud together. Record the sentence on the board and compare it to students' suggestions. Explain that sometimes the author states the main idea at the beginning of the book.

Vocabulary

Have students turn to the "Words to Know" box on the copyright page. Point out that these words can be found in the story and that understanding the meaning of each word will help them better understand what they read. Read the words aloud to students and, as a group, discuss the meaning of each word. On the basis of the definitions discussed, have students work in groups to illustrate each vocabulary word on a poster. Have students share their posters with the class.

Set the Purpose

- Have students read to find out more about river otters. Write the Focus Question on the board. Invite students to look for evidence in the book to support their answer to the question.
- Have students make a small question mark in their book beside any word they do not understand or cannot pronounce. These can be addressed in a future discussion.

During Reading

Text-Dependent Questions

As students read the book, monitor their understanding with the following questions. Encourage students to support their answers by citing evidence from the book.

- *Where do river otters live?* (level 1) page 4
- *What do river otters look like?* (level 2) multiple pages
- *What things can all river otters do?* (level 2) multiple pages
- *What types of food do otters eat?* (level 2) page 10
- *Why did the author write this book about river otters?* (level 3) multiple pages

Text Features: Photographs

Explain that nonfiction books often include photographs. Point out that photographs are pictures taken by a camera. Explain that photographs often include many details that give readers more information about the topic of the book. Have students look through the book and discuss details in the photographs with a partner. Ask students: *What*

did you learn about river otters from the text? What details do you see in the photographs that are not given in the text? Have students choose one photograph in the book and describe the details they see to a partner. Invite volunteers to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

Skill Review

- Model for students how you create visual images as you read, and direct them to stop at several points during reading to draw a representation of what they visualize. Invite volunteers to share their pictures with the rest of the class. Discuss with students how their pictures compare with the pictures in the book.
- Have students work in groups to review the main idea of the book and discuss the details they have read. Have groups share the details they found with the rest of the class. Record the details on the board under the main idea.
- Model identifying details that support the main idea.

Think-aloud: *Earlier we agreed that the main idea of the book is: River otters are amazing animals. As I read the book, I learned details about river otters that make them amazing. They live near water and have thin bodies, short legs, and thick fur. They are also good at swimming. These are a few of the important details I read in the book about river otters. All the details support the main idea that river otters are amazing animals. Thinking about the details that support the main idea helps me remember the important information from the book.*

- Model how to complete the [main-idea-and-details worksheet](#). Have students record the main idea on the worksheet. Then, have students discuss a detail with a partner and determine whether it supports the main idea. Have volunteers share one detail with the class. Model how to place the detail on the worksheet.

After Reading

Ask students what words, if any, they marked in their book. Use this opportunity to model how they can read these words using decoding strategies and context clues.

Skill Review

Graphic Organizer: Main ideas and details

Review the main-idea-and-details worksheet that students completed. Have students share their work in groups. Invite volunteers to share with the rest of the class the details they chose. Have students justify why each detail supports the main idea.

Comprehension Extension

Discussion cards covering comprehension skills and strategies not explicitly taught with the book are provided for extension activities.

Guiding the Reading (cont.)

Response to Focus Question

Have students cite specific evidence from the book to answer the Focus Question. (Answers will vary. Reasons should include characteristics that all river otters share. Samples: *All river otters live near water. They all have short legs, long bodies, and thick fur. All river otters are good at swimming, holding their breath, catching food, and playing together.*)

Comprehension Checks

- Book quiz
- Retelling rubric

Book Extension Activities

Build Skills

Phonological Awareness: Short vowel /i/ sound

- Say the word *river* aloud to students, emphasizing the short vowel /i/ sound. Have students say the word aloud and then say the short /i/ sound.
- Read page 7 aloud to students. Have students raise their hand when they hear a word that has the short vowel /i/ sound.
- Have students practice making the short vowel /i/ sound with a partner. Have student pairs generate words that have the short vowel /i/ sound. Walk around and listen to students to make sure they are making the sound correctly. Have volunteers share some of the words generated with the whole group.
- **Check for understanding:** Say the following words one at a time, and have students snap their fingers when they hear a word with the short vowel /i/ sound: *drip, brat, big, swim, duck, live, fur, and thin.*

Phonics: Short vowel i

- Write the word *river* on the board and say it aloud with students.
- Have students say the short vowel /i/ sound aloud. Then, run your finger under the letters in the word *river* as students say the whole word aloud. Ask students to identify which letter represents the short vowel /i/ sound in the word *river*.
- Say the words *swim* and *swam* aloud, emphasizing the vowel sounds, and have students write the words on a sheet of paper. Have students compare their words with a partner's. Have students circle the word with the short vowel /i/ sound.
- **Check for understanding:** Write the following words with the short vowel /i/ sound on the board, leaving out the vowel: *ship, prim, lift*. Say each word, one at a time, and have volunteers come to the board and add the short vowel *i* to each word.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [short-vowel -i worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

Grammar and Mechanics: Simple subjects

- Explain to students that every sentence has a *subject*, or a noun that the sentence is about. Explain that the subject can be a person, an animal, or an object. Point out that often the subject is performing the action in the sentence.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *All river otters live near water.* Read the sentence aloud with students. Ask students to name the subject in the sentence (*river otters*).
- Write several sentences on the board that describe river otters. Have students read each sentence and work with a partner to identify the subject. Invite volunteers to come to the board and circle the subject of each sentence.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students reread pages 5 through 8 with a partner and circle the subject in each sentence. Have volunteers share their results with the rest of the class.
- **Independent practice:** Introduce, explain, and have students complete the [simple subjects worksheet](#). If time allows, discuss their answers.

Word Work: High-frequency word all

- Write the word *all* on the board and read it aloud with students. Explain to students that they will often see this word in books they read and they should memorize it so they can decode it right away.
- Spell the word aloud while students write each letter on top of their desk.
- Write the following sentence on the board: *All river otters can swim.* Read it aloud with students and discuss the meaning of the word *all*.
- Have students practice spelling *all* in the air with their finger.
- **Check for understanding:** Have students work in pairs to create oral sentences using the word *all*. Call on students to share a sentence with the rest of the class, and ask other students to give a thumbs-up signal if they used the word *all* correctly.

Connections

- See the back of the book for cross-curricular extension ideas.