GRASSHOPPER

🦁 Wild Artists: Drawing the Animal Kingdom

1 hour · Pre-K – 8th · After School · Teacher: Jason Mealer

Instructions: This lesson plan is your starting point — feel free to edit, rearrange, or customize it to fit your teaching style and your students' needs! These notes are yours. They will not be published anywhere.

Topics Covered

Animal illustration · Drawing techniques · Observation skills · Color theory · Artistic expression · Wildlife appreciation

Lesson Plan

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1. Wild Welcome Circle (8 min)

- Gather students in a circle and share the animal of the day with an exciting fact (e.g., 'Did you know chameleons can move each eye independently?')
- Show 2–3 reference photos of the featured animal from different angles using printed images or a tablet
- Ask students to describe what shapes they see in the animal's body (circles, ovals, triangles)
- Demonstrate one quick movement the animal makes and have everyone mimic it together

2. Shape Hunt Warm-Up (10 min)

- Distribute paper and pencils to each student at their workspace
- Guide students to draw basic shapes (circles, ovals, rectangles) that make up the animal's body structure
- Walk around and point out 'I see you found the oval for the body!' to reinforce observation
- Have students lightly sketch 2–3 different size circles/ovals to practice proportion

3. Main Drawing Session (25 min)

- Demonstrate step-by-step: start with largest body shape, add head, then legs/tail, finally details like eyes

and texture

- Students follow along at their own pace while you repeat steps and circulate to provide individual guidance
- Encourage students to add their own creative twist: 'What is your animal doing? Sleeping? Running? Making friends?'
- Introduce one technique each week: contour lines (Week 1), shading with pencil pressure (Week 2), pattern repetition (Week 3), color mixing (Week 4)
- Play gentle background music to create a focused, creative atmosphere

4. Color and Detail Time (12 min)

- Students choose their coloring materials: crayons, markers, colored pencils, or watercolors depending on week
- Demonstrate one coloring technique: layering colors, leaving white space for highlights, or blending
- Encourage students to reference the photos but also use imagination: 'What if your lion had a rainbow mane?'
- Circulate and give specific praise: 'I love how you made the fur texture with short lines!'

5. Gallery Share (5 min)

- Students hold up their artwork while seated in a circle or at tables
- Each student shares one thing they're proud of or one thing that was tricky
- Group gives snaps, claps, or a fun cheer for each artist
- Collect artwork in folders or display on a designated wall for parents to see at pickup

Materials Checklist

- ☐ Drawing paper (white, 9×12 or 11×14)
- ☐ Pencils and erasers
- ☐ Crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- ☐ Printed animal reference photos (3–5 per week)
- ☐ Watercolor sets and brushes (for Week 4)
- ☐ Black fine-tip markers or Sharpies
- ☐ Individual folders for storing artwork
- ☐ Smocks or old t-shirts for messy weeks

Age Adaptations

Younger Kids: Pre-K to 1st graders: Focus on simpler animals with fewer details (cats, fish, butterflies). Use thicker crayons and markers. Allow tracing templates as an option. Keep instructions to 2–3 steps at a time. Emphasize fun and exploration over accuracy. Use larger paper (12×18). Provide hand-over-hand guidance for students who need it.

Older Kids: 5th to 8th graders: Choose complex animals with intricate patterns (tigers, owls, reptiles). Teach shading, cross-hatching, and perspective. Introduce anatomy basics like skeletal structure. Allow students to research and choose their own animal variations. Challenge them to create habitat backgrounds. Offer advanced techniques like stippling or charcoal drawing. Encourage portfolio-building mindset.

Movement Break

Animal Action Break (between steps 3 and 4): Call out animal names and students act them out for 10 seconds each — slither like a snake, hop like a kangaroo, stomp like an elephant, fly like an eagle, prowl like a tiger. End with everyone 'shaking out their wild energy' and taking three deep breaths to refocus for coloring time.

Bonus Activities

- Create a group mural where each student adds their animal to a shared savanna, jungle, or ocean scene on butcher paper
- Fast sketch challenge: give 2 minutes to draw a mini version of a surprise animal you call out
- Animal fact cards: students write one amazing fact about their animal on an index card to take home
- Mix-and-match creature: combine two animals to invent a new wild hybrid (elephant + butterfly = 'elephly')

Series Outline (4 Weeks)

Week	Theme	Key Activities
1	**Week 1: Savanna Giants**	Draw lions or elephants using basic circle and oval shapes, Learn contour drawing: following the outline slowly and carefully, Add details like manes, tusks, and tails using observation skills
2	**Week 2: Jungle Prowlers**	Illustrate tigers or leopards with stripe and spot patterns, Practice shading techniques by varying pencil pressure for 3D effect, Create texture using repeated marks to show fur
3	**Week 3: Sky Soaring Birds**	Draw eagles, parrots, or owls focusing on wing shapes and feather patterns, Learn about symmetry in nature and mirror techniques, Use fine-tip markers to add intricate feather details and patterns

Week	Theme	Key Activities
4	**Week 4: Ocean Wonders**	Create sea turtles, dolphins, or tropical fish illustrations, Introduce watercolors for blending ocean-inspired color palettes, Add highlights and reflections to show water and movement, Host mini art show where students present their favorite piece from the series



This lesson plan was drafted by Hopper, the Grasshopper Kids AI assistant. Want different results? You can generate another plan, or text us with feedback so we can make the tool better. We built this to help save you time bringing more enrichment ideas to life!

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