



EVERGREEN

# Teacher's Corner Lesson Plans

*Helping Teachers and Students Make the Most of  
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## Postcards from the Perfect Plot\*†

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Grade level: 4

Provincial curriculum links: Ontario

Subject: Language

Keywords: writing, postcards, habitat

### Description

Based on the book "Meerkat Mail" and referencing the Data Drawings from "Is this a Habitat for Me?", students create postcards from a traveling earthworm that visits the school ground habitats looking for a new place to live.

### Curriculum Framework

Topic: Writing and Reading

Strand: Reading, Writing, Oral and Visual Communication

Specific Lesson Goals:

- **Oral Communication:** listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes;
- **Reading:** read and demonstrate an understanding of a variety of literary, graphic, and informational texts, using a range of strategies to construct meaning;
  - recognize a variety of text forms, text features, and stylistic elements and demonstrate understanding of how they help communicate meaning;
- **Writing:** generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience;

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\* This exercise is adapted from *Teaching in the Outdoor Classroom*, Evergreen/TDSB Summer Institute, 2007, 82 pages.

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- draft and revise their writing, using a variety of informational, literary, and graphic forms and stylistic elements appropriate for the purpose and audience;
- use editing, proofreading, and publishing skills and strategies, and knowledge of language conventions, to correct errors, refine expression, and present their work effectively;
- **Media Literacy:** create a variety of media texts for different purposes and audiences, using appropriate forms, conventions, and techniques;

## Preparation

Preparation Time:

- 5 min

Length of lesson:

- 20-30 min

Resources required:

- blank postcards - 3x5 cardstock or recipe card (1 per student)
- rough draft paper
- drawing and colour implements (pencils and erasers, pencil crayons, markers)
- *Meerkat Mail* by Emily Gravett, Macmillan Children's Books (4 Aug 2006)  
ISBN-10: 1405052155
- authentic sample postcards if possible,
- **Optional:** *Diary of a Worm*, Doreen Cronin, Publisher: Joanna Cotler (August 14, 2003) ISBN-10: 006000150X

## Procedure

1. Discuss with students their experience receiving or sending postcards. Show authentic postcards and discuss purpose, interesting features, style of writing etc.
2. Read *Meerkat Mail*, by Emily Gravett to the class. Discuss how the author used the postcards to reveal the problems the Meercat was facing in each location. Include a discussion about the structure, form and style of the postcard writing.
3. 3. With the students, compare the Meerkat's experiences with those of earthworms living in their schoolyard. Think what it might be like for an earthworm to relocate to each of the study plots in "Is this a Habitat For Me" activity.

4. Have students choose one of the earthworm study plots for the postcard activity.
5. In the style of Meerkat Mail, invite students to create a postcard complete with picture, address, return address and letter from a worm's perspective. Have students describe the habitat in which the worm finds itself, including the reactions to the location and troubles the worm may be having. Using the data drawings, from "Is This a Habitat for Me" (also available through Teacher's Corner) activity as a reference, ask students to design a postcard picture that represents the habitat.
6. Offer students opportunities to draft and revise their postcards using self, peer and teacher conferences to present their work effectively.

## Discussion and Questions

- Ask students to compare postcards to letters or emails. Which one do they like receiving and why?
- Discuss with the students how has the author used text forms such as first-person record of events, thoughts and feelings and elements of style such as humour, alliteration, and descriptive words to help convey the mood or sensory impressions.

## Student Assessment and Evaluation

Through writing, students communicate connections between animals and their habitat.

- Brainstorm with students criteria to evaluate the postcards from its literary style, visual communication and its content. Observe how the students communicate effectively the various environmental factors that affect worms in each study plot through both the picture and the writing.
- Ask students to reflect and share in which ways they have used text forms such as first-person record of events, thoughts and feelings and elements of style such as humour, alliteration, and descriptive words to help convey the mood or sensory impressions.

## Enrichment and Extension Activities

- Use the collections of postcards to create a class book.
- As students learn about other living creatures that live in the schoolyard, continue to write postcards in role. Have students respond to each other's postcards.

- Invite students to create postcards from locations completely inhabitable to earthworms.
- Have students experiment with other media to create postcard picture, e.g. digital photos, watercolours, charcoal sketches etc.

## Educator Notes

This literacy activity is intended to be linked to the science lesson *"Is this a Habitat for me"* and the art activity *"Mapping the Ground: Transparent Drawings"*