



Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
8th Edition

Benchmark

Grade 7

Student Materials

Coyotes and Wolves

Coyotes and wolves are both types of wild canines native to the United States. They are related. In some parts of the country, they have mixed to create a sub species called coywolf. While coyotes and wolves are similar animals, they are also different in many ways.

While wolves once inhabited much of North America, they are now limited to wilderness areas. In the meantime, coyotes have spread from the western half of the country to the Southeast and Northeast. Unlike wolves, they do well living around humans and can even be found in cities.

On average, wolves are much larger than coyotes. Coyotes have sharper ears and noses, while wolves have more rounded ears and bigger noses. While coyotes' fur tends to be gray or brown, wolves can be gray, white, red, or black. Coyotes can run faster and longer than wolves.

Both wolves and coyotes live in family units that include a mother, a father, and puppies. Coyote packs may expand temporarily to include unrelated adult and young coyotes for hunting, but wolf packs usually contain many families.

Wolves hunt in packs to kill very large prey like bears or elk. Coyotes hunt in pairs and eat smaller prey such as rabbits, mice, and reptiles, though they may sometimes cooperate with other adults to kill larger mammals. Unlike wolves, coyotes will also eat fruits and vegetables.

Coyotes and wolves are both important in Native American stories. Wolves usually symbolize strength and loyalty. Often, coyotes play the part of a trickster or one who breaks the rules in clever ways.

Wolves and coyotes are similar animals, but subtle differences in behavior and living conditions make them different species.

Fizzy Water

Soda, pop, soft drink, cola, seltzer -- these are all different names for the same drink that many people enjoy today. Whatever you call it, fizzy water has a unique history! What makes soda water unique is the carbonation. The carbonation comes from carbon dioxide. You may have heard of carbon dioxide before in science class. It is the chemical that people exhale when breathing. It is also the chemical that plants use as food. Companies add carbon dioxide to water through extreme pressure to make soda or seltzer water. But now you can make fizzy water at home, too.

Hundreds of years ago, soda water was sold at pharmacies as a remedy. People believed that this fizzy water would solve all types of health problems. Pharmacists would mix the bubbly water with other drugs and flavors for their patients. We now know that soda water has no real health benefits. Although there is no real benefit from soda water, people grew to love the feel of the bubbles on their tongue. Now, soda water is popular around the world for non-medical reasons.

Soda water is the same regardless of how it is used, but there are many different flavors that you can add to soda water. Originally, pharmacists would add flavors like lime, cherry, or even coffee to soda water. One of the first best selling flavors of soda was Dr. Pepper. Another early flavor was Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola was originally promoted to have health benefits that would restore strength. We now know that these claims are false. Companies aren't allowed to make false claims like this anymore. (Sometimes they still make false claims and can be sued.) Another problem with flavored sodas is that they contain a lot of sugar, which can lead to other health problems.

Because of the health issues associated with too much sugar, cola companies started making diet versions of their soda. The first diet soda was a sugar-free ginger ale. Other diet sodas quickly came to market. Diet sodas have increased in popularity ever since. Today, however, many people are trying to choose healthier drinks such as tea, unflavored soda water, or even just plain water.

Prize Winning Vegetables

My great-uncle Bradford and my great-aunt Marianne lived in a tin-roofed cabin on the sunny side of a steep hill. Throughout the county, they were renowned for the prize-winning vegetables their garden patch produced. One year, they grew a pumpkin as large as a five-year-old child is tall. Every spring, the neighbors came to beg for some of their tomato seeds, but, even using their seeds, no one grew tomatoes as deeply red and juicy as my great-aunt and uncle did.

Some said it was luck that accounted for their success. Some swore Bradford was spraying his plants with some secret chemical formula. Bradford said it was his fiddle-playing on moonlit nights that caused the garden to flourish. Marianne always said, with a mysterious smile, “You just have to know how.”

One summer, at the end of August, when Bradford and Marianne were out in the garden with their harvesting baskets, Marianne discovered an enormous zucchini hiding under some leaves. It was much too large to fit in her basket. It was already bigger than a newborn baby. Well, let’s just see how big it gets, Marianne said to herself.

A week later, when they went to check on the zucchini, it was the size of a year-old piglet. Bradford wanted to bring it in, but Marianne convinced him to leave it on the vine just a little bit longer.

The following week, it was the size of a young calf. Then, it was the size of the calf’s cud-chewing mother.

Finally, in October, they decided to pick it before the frost came. By then, it was the size of a recreational vehicle. Its growth had already knocked down the garden fence, and it was starting to threaten the side of the house.

It took an axe to chop the stem, and two men on a cross-cut saw to slice the gigantic vegetable into manageable pieces. Marianne cut some pieces into slivers, which she put up in a pickle brine, and some other chunks she put into a wood chipper and used the pulp for zucchini bread.

Here’s my theory: the garden sits on a spot where an asteroid fell to earth, and the vegetables are nourished by extraterrestrial minerals.