

Panda Goes to School

Lesson Plan for Grades 3 through 5

Timing	Preparation Time: About 30 minutes Presentation Time: 25-30 minutes.
Program Objectives	<u>Panda Goes to School</u> is designed to teach elementary school students about the endangered giant panda. Through this program Panda Express is helping children to become aware of the rich heritage of the panda in China and what they can do to help preserve this endangered species.
Presentation	We have prepared a detailed outline for your presentation. Depending on the students' grade level, you may want to tailor the presentation somewhat. For example, in an older class, you may want to lead more discussion among the students.

Introduction

Explain to the students that you are there today to talk to them about the giant panda, which is an important endangered animal. Let them know that you will teach them about:

- Where giant pandas live
- What pandas look like
- What pandas do all day
- Why pandas are special to the people of China
- Why pandas are an endangered species
- How people are helping to save the giant panda

Where the Panda Lives

- Begin by holding up your photograph of a giant panda so that all students can get a good look. Ask if any students can tell you what this animal is called? Answer: panda or giant panda
- The common name for this animal is the giant panda. It has a scientific name that is very long: AILUROPODA MELANOLEUCA.
- The panda is part of the bear family although it's not entirely like other bears. For one thing, it does not hibernate during the winter as other bears do.
- Ask if they know where this animal lives? If there are more than 2 or 3 incorrect answers, tell the students that the right answer is China.
 - Pandas live in the high mountains of Central China.
 - Pandas live in rainy forests where they make a den in the hollow trunks of trees.
 - In China the panda is also known as the Bamboo Bear.
 - Its Chinese name is daxiongmao which means "Large Bear Cat."
- Ask if any students have seen a real giant panda and if so, where did they see it, what did it look like, what did they think about it?

Visual Tip: If there is a world map or globe in the classroom, ask if any students can point to the country of China. Be prepared to point out the mountains where pandas can be found.

How Pandas Look

Visual Tip: You may want to take along a visual aid to show the size of a newborn Panda. A small “beenie baby” type stuffed animal would be a good example.

- When they are fully grown, pandas are almost as big as a full-grown human, which means they are almost as big as you (the presenter) are.
- But when they are born, they are very, very small . . . about the size of a stick of butter.
- When pandas are born they don’t have any hair at all.
- Pandas are always black and white but no two pandas look exactly alike as there are small differences in their markings.

How Pandas Behave

Visual Tip: If there are bamboo plants in your yard or neighborhood, try to take along some branches as a visual aid.

- Pandas are very shy and for the most part they like to live alone. In fact, some scientists believe that pandas are black and white so that they can see each other more easily and stay away from each other. They want to be alone!
- Pandas spend most of the day eating. They will eat about 16 hours a day.
- Why do they eat so much? Because their favorite food is bamboo. Do any of you know what bamboo is? Bamboo is a giant grass that grows in China. Unfortunately, bamboo is not very nutritious, so the panda must eat lots of it each day to get the energy it needs. Grown up pandas may eat as much as 40 pounds each day. Forty pounds is about as much as a Kindergarten student weighs!
- Pandas that live in zoos have found out that they like some other foods too so they also enjoy special treats like fruit, flowers, fish, vines and even a few small rodents.
- Pandas can be very playful. They may try to run but often they will trip and roll forward – like a somersault. They think this is a lot of fun too so they’ll roll over and over again.

Why Pandas are Special to the People of China.

- For hundreds of years the people of China have had a special relationship with the Panda.
 - They treasure the giant panda because it has always been a rare animal.
 - They believe that the panda is a symbol of peace and good fortune.
- The people of China are also working hard to save the giant panda from extinction. There are special centers in China where scientists and others work to learn more about the giant pandas and raise them in captivity. Ultimately, they would like to reintroduce giant pandas to the wild in China.
- The giant panda has also become a goodwill ambassador from China to the United States. The first panda came to the United States in 1936 and today there are 6 pandas in American Zoos.
 - Tian Tian and Mei Xiang at the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington D.C.
 - Lun Lun and Yang Yang at Zoo Atlanta in Georgia.
 - Shi Shi and Bai Yun at the San Diego Zoo in California.
 - Shi Shi and Bai Yun are special because they were parents to the first successful panda birth in the U.S. Their baby is named Hua Mei. She lived in San Diego until she was two years old and has now gone back to her homeland in China.

How People are Helping to Save the Giant Panda.

- Ask the students:
“Do you know that today YOU are doing something to help save the giant panda? Do you know what you are doing? ”
Answer: They are helping today because they are learning about the giant panda. And the more that people of all ages learn about pandas, the more careful they will be to protect them from disappearing.
- What are other ways that you can learn more about pandas?
(Ask students for their ideas.)
 - Library/books
 - Television shows (such as Animal Planet)
 - Internet
 - Visiting the zoo

Activity

- Distribute the Panda Kids Worksheet Level 2 - the activities are fun and help the students to find out how much they have learned.
- Congratulate the students for learning about the giant panda.